

Booklist

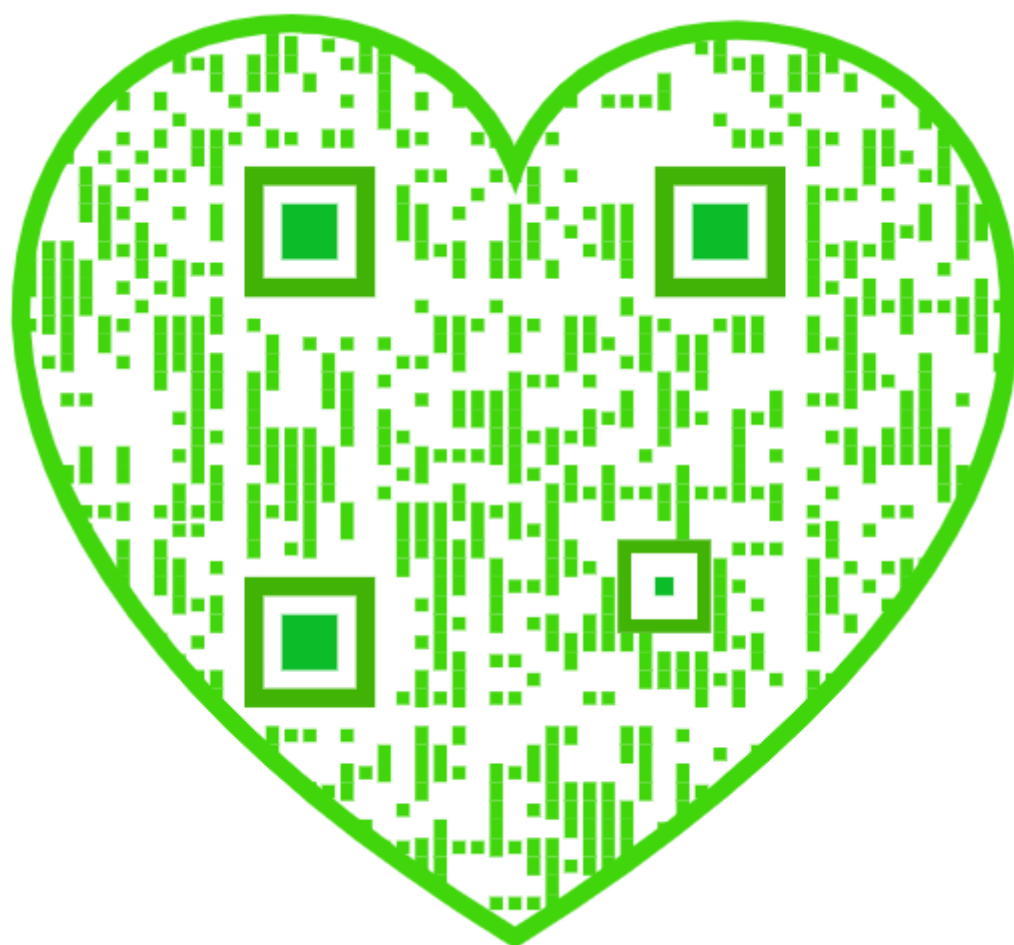
Leading book discovery

Vol. 121 No. 17/18
5/1/25 & 5/15/25

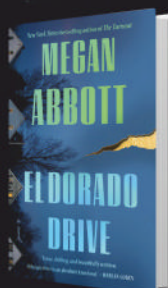
Spotlights on
**Mysteries &
Thrillers**
and
Reference

Art by Maeve Norton and directed by CJ Johnson,
from *Your Final Moments*, by Jay Coles

ALA American Library Association



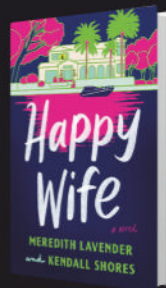
BOOKS TO DIE FOR



Megan Abbott
EL DORADO DRIVE

From the *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Turnout* comes a simmering, atmospheric novel of friendship and betrayal, following a women-led pyramid scheme in suburban Detroit.

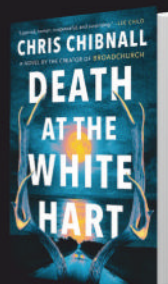
978-0-593-08496-0 | \$30.00/\$39.99C
75,000 | Putnam | HC | June
📞 978-0-593-08497-7 📞 979-8-217-01178-0
📞 979-8-217-08252-0



Meredith Lavender and Kendall Shores
HAPPY WIFE: A NOVEL

A young woman must find her missing husband and prove her innocence in this twisty, unputdownable novel set in an ultrawealthy Florida community where looks can kill.

978-0-593-97437-7 | \$30.00/\$39.99C
100,000 | Bantam | HC | June
📞 978-0-593-97438-4 📞 979-8-217-06510-3
📞 979-8-217-08363-3



Chris Chibnall
DEATH AT THE WHITE HART: A NOVEL

From the internationally award-winning creator of *Broadchurch* comes a brilliant new detective story following one man's death and the secrets that unravel in a coastal English village.

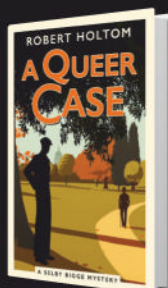
978-0-593-83157-1 | \$30.00/\$39.99C
50,000 | Pamela Dorman Books | HC | June
📞 978-0-593-83158-8 📞 979-8-217-01237-4
📞 979-8-217-06750-3



Joyce Carol Oates
FOX: A NOVEL

A spellbinding novel of literary and psychological suspense about the dark secrets that surface after the shocking disappearance of a charismatic, mercurial teacher at an elite boarding school—by the legendary author “who is surely on any shortlist of America’s greatest living writers” (*The New York Times Magazine*).

978-0-593-97808-5 | \$32.00/\$42.00C
100,000 | Hogarth | HC | June
📞 978-0-593-97810-8 📞 979-8-217-07612-3



Robert Holtom
A QUEER CASE: THE SELBY BIGGE MYSTERIES SERIES

A gripping 1920s-set whodunnit, this debut features a queer sleuth who must solve a murder in a mansion on London's Hampstead Heath without revealing his sexuality, lest he be arrested as a criminal.

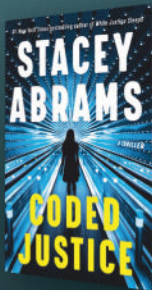
978-1-835-41317-3 | \$18.99/\$24.99C
50,000 | Titan Books | TR | June
📞 978-1-835-41318-0



Mel Pennant
A MURDER FOR MISS HORTENSE: A MYSTERY

In Bigglesweigh, old people are starting to die. Miss Hortense must solve a mystery that will see her, and the community she loves, tested to their limits in this mystery perfect for fans of Alexander McCall Smith.

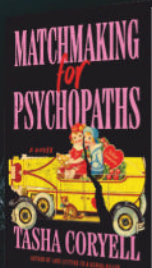
978-0-593-70162-1 | \$27.00/\$37.00C
35,000 | Pantheon | HC | June
📞 978-0-593-70163-8 📞 979-8-217-07651-2
📞 979-8-217-15773-0



Stacey Abrams
CODED JUSTICE: A THRILLER

A prescient new thriller in the #1 New York Times bestselling Avery Keene series, by nationally renowned author and leader Stacey Abrams, *Coded Justice* follows Avery down a dark rabbit hole into the breathtaking—and dangerous—use of AI in the medical industry.

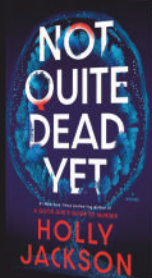
978-0-385-54834-2 | \$30.00/\$39.99C
125,000 | Doubleday | HC | July
📞 978-0-385-54835-9 📞 979-8-217-07574-4
📞 979-8-217-15767-9



Tasha Coryell
MATCHMAKING FOR PSYCHOPATHS

An unbelievably gripping, completely original novel about a woman working as a matchmaker for a very specific clientele—psychopaths—who finds herself in danger ... from the bestselling author behind *Love Letters to a Serial Killer*.

978-0-593-64030-2 | \$29.00/\$39.00C
50,000 | Berkley | HC | July
📞 978-0-593-64032-6 📞 979-8-217-07535-5



Holly Jackson
NOT QUITE DEAD YET: A NOVEL

The #1 New York Times bestselling author of *A Good Girl's Guide to Murder*—now a hit Netflix series—returns with her first novel for adults: a twisty thriller about a young woman trying to solve her own murder.

978-0-593-97705-7 | \$28.00
500,000 | Bantam | HC | July
978-0-385-70143-3 | \$37.00C
Doubleday Canada | HC
📞 978-0-593-97706-4 📞 979-8-217-08127-1
📞 979-8-217-15756-3



Jo Piazza
EVERYONE IS LYING TO YOU: A THRILLER

From the bestselling author of *The Sicilian Inheritance* and the creator of the *Under the Influence* podcast comes an explosive #tradwife thriller about two estranged friends, a sudden disappearance and murder, and the truly shocking revelation that everyone is lying to you about something.

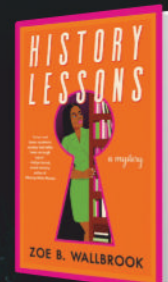
978-8-217-04647-8 | \$19.00/\$25.99C
75,000 | Dutton | TR | July
📞 979-8-217-04648-5 📞 979-8-217-07745-8
📞 979-8-217-08258-2



Virginia Trench
OUR SECRETS WERE SAFE: A NOVEL

Someone knows what really happened the night Sofia Eliades died. The guilty have escaped unscathed for a decade. Can you untangle this web of lies and discover the terrible truth?

978-0-593-79852-2 | \$28.00/\$37.99C
50,000 | Crown | HC | July
📞 978-0-593-79853-9 📞 979-8-217-07822-6
📞 979-8-217-15761-7



Zoe B. Wallbrook
HISTORY LESSONS

A college history professor must solve her superstar colleague's murder before she becomes the next target in this funny, romantic debut mystery, perfect for readers of Janet Evanovich, Kellye Garrett, and Ali Hazelwood.

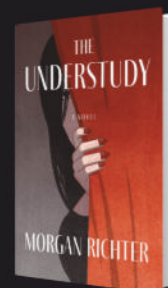
978-1-641-29552-9 | \$25.95/\$34.95C
60,000 | Soho Crime | July
📞 978-1-641-29553-6



Mary Watson
THE CLEANER: A NOVEL

It's not dust she's looking for ... it's dirt. Esmie's come to this neighborhood for one purpose and one purpose only. Revenge. Armed with a duster and a cunning plan, Esmie could soon find herself entangled with the very people she came to destroy.

979-8-217-08591-0 | \$18.00
50,000 | Crown | TR | July
978-1039-01331-5 | \$26.00C
Random House Canada | TR
📞 979-8-217-08592-7 📞 979-8-217-08343-5
📞 979-8-217-15762-4



Morgan Richter
THE UNDERSTUDY: A NOVEL

An opera singer uncovers the dark secrets of her cruel and alluring understudy when a murder disrupts her disciplined world.

978-0-593-68570-9 | \$28.00/\$37.99C
40,000 | Knopf | HC | August
📞 978-0-593-68571-6 📞 979-8-217-07843-1



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May 1 & 15, 2025
Volume 121, Issue 17/18

Letter from the Publisher / George Kendall

Many of us enjoy mysteries, thrillers, and true crime because these enigmatic or hard-core genres offer a safe space to explore the darker aspects of humanity. These books also offer an escape from the realities of daily life as well as mind-bending puzzles and illumination of the complexities of the justice system, all avidly explored by adventurous readers.

With all that in mind, we're excited about the May issue of *Booklist* and its blockbuster Spotlight on Mysteries & Thrillers and Focus on True Crime. Be sure to check out Donna Seaman's interview with celebrated crime-fiction writer Michael Connelly (p.46), Biz Hyzy's Jane Austen-Inspired Mysteries (p.54), Julia Smith's Kid Detectives (p.108), and New Mysteries and Thrillers on Audio (p.114).

As always, there's more here than the spotlight and you'll also find lots of exciting features in our May issue of *Booklist Reader*. Remember that the digital version of *Booklist Reader* is an ALA member benefit, so if you're not already an ALA member now is the best time to join! Not only will your membership support libraries and library workers, you'll also gain personal access to the digital *Booklist Reader* and ALA's membership magazine, *American Libraries*.

As Chicagoland warms up, May brings many observances and celebrations. Mother's Day is right around the corner (my grandmother loved mysteries). Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) Heritage Month and Mental Health Awareness Month are also celebrated in May. Memorial Day is considered the unofficial start of summer and, as it begins, we at ALA will be in major ramp-up mode for the ALA Annual Conference and Exhibition that takes place in Philadelphia, June 26–30.

I hope to see many of you there this year. It's certainly going to be a conference like no other I've experienced. *Booklist* has many events planned, all set in the birthplace of the United States, where the Constitution was signed. During a precarious time when I personally feel that the world is "slouching towards Bethlehem," I'm so looking forward to this time together with like-minded reading, cultural, and library enthusiasts.

This leads me back to this issue's spotlight and how we balance reading, pleasure, and art with sobering circumstances. In addition to focusing on crime, mysteries and thrillers also immerse readers in affirming tales of survival and renewal amid destruction.

I hope this issue of *Booklist* helps to revitalize and rejuvenate you and your team, and that our team has the honor of meeting you in Philadelphia this summer.



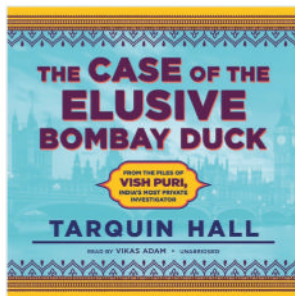
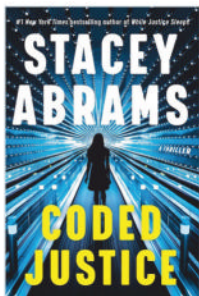
On the Cover

From *Your Final Moments*, by Jay Coles, published by Scholastic. *Your Final Moments* is reviewed in this issue's Spotlight on Mysteries & Thrillers. Cover art created by Maeve Norton and directed by CJ Johnson. Used by permission of the publisher.

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Journalism & Publishing

Somebody Told Me . . . : One Man's Unexpected Journey Down the Rabbit Hole of Lies, Trolls, and Conspiracies. By Danny Wallace.

June 2025, 320p. Prometheus, paper, \$24.95 (9781493090792); e-book (9781493090808). 001.98.

One of the most troubling recent trends is the proliferation of disinformation along with a commensurate rise in the percentage of the population that believes it. Wallace (*Yes Man*, 2005) has taken a hard look at the phenomenon, its negative impact on society and politics, and the harm it does to people caught up in an ever more pervasive web of conspiracy theories, deception, and fear-mongering. He examines different aspects of the phenomenon, such as media disinformation, social-media trolls, incels, and adult-onset paranoia. He gives examples of how families are torn apart by belief in negative falsehoods. Importantly, he does not exclude himself from examination, taking a harsh look at how he has, as the saying goes, "fallen down the rabbit hole." He tells how to recognize disinformation and thus avoid the rabbit hole in one's own life. Wallace's book is a crucial guidebook to navigating the daily morass of deception and disinformation that pervades modern American society. —Gary Day

Philosophy & Psychology

Bibliotherapy in the Bronx. By Emely Rumble.

May 2025, 230p. Row House, \$27.99 (9781955905879). 158.

As a licensed clinical social work of African American and Puerto Rican descent, Rumble has worked in the Bronx with a range of clients, from school children to older adults. She's found that using literature builds empathy, social awareness, and humanity. Rumble begins with a history of bibliotherapy and then quickly moves to practical applications. Her case studies demonstrate how reading passages from carefully chosen books has allowed her clients to open up to their own issues. Poetry and hip-hop are especially valuable working with young clients, helping them to relate to others, vocalize their own struggles, and form paths to healing. Rumble uses specific examples from a variety of novels and poems to give readers a starting point for their own bibliotherapeutic interactions. She reminds readers of the wonder of books, the insights that they provide, and the importance of sharing stories. Anyone who connects with readers, be they librarians, teachers, parents, caregivers, or therapists, will be inspired by the author's enthusiasm and practical suggestions and moved to use Rumble's suggestions as starting points for their own sessions. —Candace Smith

Bless the Messy: Life Lessons from a Work in Progress.

By Jess Bird.

June 2025, 176p. illus. Simon Element, \$24.99 (9781668020708); e-book (9781668020715). 158.1.

Bird is a self-proclaimed mess: emotionally, metaphorically and usually physically. Raised by a single mother in low-income housing and surrounded by abuse, she has always had a chaotic life. Now a mother and an artist, Bird is working through her issues. Coming out as gay was a first big step, but even more importantly, Bird has chosen life over having an "escape plan." Admittedly, she isn't a therapist, but as someone who has pulled herself back from the brink, Bird is someone worth hearing. Speaking openly and honestly, the author recalls times in her life where she tried to fit in, fly beneath the radar, and please others to be accepted. Therapy led to tiny steps toward self-love, self-acceptance, and accepting feelings. Throughout, the prose is punctuated by brightly colored paintings and collages, each reinforcing Bird's insights and filled with statements like, "Note to self: You were always enough," and "Deciding to live is one of the bravest things you can do." The author's vulnerability and willingness to share her trials will be inspiring for others on similar journeys. —Candace Smith

YA: *Older teens will connect with Bird's youthful style and honesty about mental health.* CS.

Fired Up: How to Turn Your Spark into a Flame and Come Alive at Any Age.

By Shannon Watts.

June 2025, 272p. Penguin/Open Field, \$30 (9780593831939); e-book (9780593655313). 158.1.

It took the Sandy Hook tragedy to convince Watts that she needed to make some changes in her life. Married too young and hurled into motherhood, the author began to re-examine her life and her marriage, finally realizing that what was missing was the fire of ideals, ambitions, and goals. Forming "Moms Demand Action," a group to fight gun violence, she found what she was seeking. Now in this book, Watts has made a blueprint for finding that fire in other women. Using stories from other successful women as well as her own experiences, the author encourages readers to identify their passions, move ahead with confidence, and seek support when needed. Keeping with the fire metaphor, she teaches readers how to stoke the bonfire, prepare for blowback, fight burnout, control the burn, and finally pass on the flame. Each chapter includes "light the match" exercises and "fan the flames" actions to get readers started on their own journeys. This is sure to be a much-needed jumpstart for women of all ages. —Candace Smith

We Can Do Hard Things: Answers to Life's 20 Questions.

By Glennon Doyle and others.

May 2025, 512p. illus. Dial, \$34 (9780593977644); e-book (9780593977668). 158.1.

Queer activist Glennon Doyle, her sister Amanda, and wife Wambach are at the center of this book exploring the meaning of life. The authors, who host the *We Can Do Hard Things* podcast, mine their audiences and friends to get a wide range of thoughts on 20 tough questions, including, *Why am I like this? How do I let go? How do I do the hard thing?* and *What is the point?* Listeners chime in with stories of their own families, strategies that have worked, and other insights. Some of the comments are from celebrities like Jane Fonda, Kamala Harris, and Reese Witherspoon. Subjects discussed include sexuality, cultural limitations, family roles, body image, forgiveness, sex, parenting, anger, and happiness. The style is breezy, with blocks of text alternating with line drawings, quotes, and affirmations from a diverse group of thinkers. At 500 pages, it's an easy read that can be sampled depending on the reader's needs. The book becomes "one huge locker of life preservers," according to Doyle, ready to rescue everyone who struggles with these thoughts (which is pretty much anyone living through adolescence and beyond). —Candace Smith

HD HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: The authors have enormous name recognition, and their podcast is a chart-topper. Prepare for long holds lists!

YA: *Teens will feel heard and find answers in these thoughtful responses.* CS.

Social Sciences

After the Spike: Population, Progress, and the Case for People. By Dean Spears and Michael Geruso.

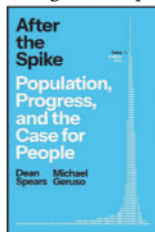
July 2025, 320p. Simon & Schuster, \$29.99 (9781668057339). 304.6.

Associate professors of economics at the University of Texas, Spears and Geruso make the counterintuitive case here that on a planet whose population leaped from 4.86 billion in 1985 to 8.19 billion 40 years later and where climate change has already landed in our midst, our best solutions going forward will derive not through depopulation, in which a peak population of 10 billion could, given decreasing global birth rates, drop to as low as 2 billion in 300 years, but rather by popu-

YA Recommendations

Adult titles recommended for teens are marked with the following symbols: **YA**, for books of general YA interest; **YA/C**, for books with particular curricular value; and **YA/S**, for books that will appeal most to teens with a special interest in a specific subject.

lation stabilization. Some of their arguments: a more populous future would generate better ideas for raising the world's standard of living, more people wanting the same thing creates greater specialization of products and talent, and problems requiring massively funded solutions can be addressed more affordably by larger populations. These ideas will challenge or even frustrate readers—for example, the authors decline to estimate how many people a “stabilized” world population might total—but, without blinking, Spears and Geruso have started an essential conversation on how humans might realistically address the vexing challenges of population change. —*Alan Moores*



★ **The Afterlife of Malcolm X: An Outcast Turned Icon's Enduring Impact on America.**
By Mark Whitaker.

May 2025, 488p. Simon & Schuster, \$30.99 (9781668033296). 320.54.

A radical globalist. A socialist revolutionary. A social conservative. All of these labels have been applied to the man known as Malcolm Little, Detroit Red, el-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz, and Malcolm X. Gunned down in Harlem at age 39 in February 1965, Malcolm's cultural relevance has continued to grow, as have the disagreements over his message and the truth about his death. Whitaker explores both in alternating chapters, looking at the events surrounding the assassination, then broadening the scope to examine the lives Malcolm touched and all that he inspired. While the murder investigation is a cautionary tale of justice delayed and denied, it is the cultural debates that form the book. Such disparate figures as Amiri Baraka, Julius Lester, Clarence Thomas, Kwame Ture, Tupac, Kareem Abdul Jabbar, John Carlos, August Wilson, and Barack Obama have cited Malcolm as an influence. His life has been the subject of documentaries, Spike Lee's iconic feature film, plays, and an Afrofuturist opera, while Public Enemy's sampling of Malcolm's “too Black, too strong” helped bring his voice to the hip-hop generation. Many have felt a lightning shock of recognition at Malcolm's powerful indictment of American racism and the tremendous and enduring pride he engendered in Black people. —*Lesley Williams*

Deep House: The Gayest Love Story Ever Told.

By Jeremy Atherton Lin.

June 2025, 416p. Little, Brown, \$29 (9780316545792). 306.76.

In a style similar to his debut, *Gay Bar*



High-Demand Hot List

Look for reviews of these high-demand titles in forthcoming issues of *Booklist*.

This month's hot list feels nonfiction heavy, with memoirs and histories to suit a variety of readers, but fiction is still representing with strong entries from favorite authors.
—*Susan Maguire*

The Academy. By Elin Hilderbrand and Shelby Cunningham. Little, Brown, \$30 (9780316567855). Sep.

Hilderbrand's first post-Nantucket novel, written with her daughter, follows a year in the life of the students and staff at a tony New England prep school, where gossip and secrets reign.

The Black Wolf. By Louise Penny. Minotaur, \$30 (9781250328175). Oct.

The twentieth Chief Inspector Gamache mystery finds our hero laid up with injuries received while stopping an attack by a terrorist called the Black Wolf—but amidst growing conspiracies, he's not sure if he caught the right person.

Girl Warrior: A Coming of Age Handbook. By Joy Harjo. Norton, \$21.99 (9781324094173). Sep.

Three-term U.S. poet laureate Harjo speaks directly to young Native women in her latest inspiring memoir (after *Poet Warrior*, 2021), encouraging them to turn to the arts and the ancestors to navigate the coming-of-age process.

Good Things: Recipes and Rituals to Share with People You Love. By Samin Nosrat. Random, \$45 (9781984857781). Sep.

The much-anticipated follow-up to Nosrat's *Salt, Fat, Acid, Heat* (2017) includes soul-nourishing recipes, from roast chicken with saffron to the perfect yellow cake, alongside such useful tips as how to buy olive oil.

Queen Esther. By John Irving. Simon & Schuster, \$30 (9781501189449). Nov.

Irving returns to the orphanage in St. Cloud's, Maine (last seen in *The Cider House Rules*), where Dr. Larch takes in a young Jewish woman whose life is marked by antisemitic violence.

Truly. By Lionel Richie. HarperOne, \$36 (9780063253643). Sep.

In the parlance of his hit song, Lionel Richie will probably be asking, “Hello? Is it my book you're looking for?” when you pick up his first memoir, which traces his life from a late bloomer in Alabama to the heady days of the Commodores to a blazingly popular solo career.

Twice. By Mitch Albom. Harper, \$26.99 (9780062406682). Oct.

An ailing man is arrested for allegedly cheating at a casino roulette wheel; then Albom turns back the clock to explore the life of a man with the power to create second chances in a novel that promises to make you think and weep.

Untitled Memoir. By Brandy. Hanover Square, \$29.99 (9781335013279). Oct.

Multiplatinum singing-sensation Brandy recounts the highs and lows of a life lived in the spotlight, going from singing in Mississippi churches to acting in TV's *Moesha* and *Cinderella*.

We the People: A History of the U.S. Constitution. By Jill Lepore. Liveright, \$39.99 (9781631496080). Sept.

Remember the Constitution? Best-selling historian Lepore explores the Constitution's history, from attempts to amend it to the founding fathers' intentions for the document in a book that promises insight and lavish illustrations.

The Zorg: A Tale of Greed and Murder that Inspired the Abolition of Slavery. By Siddharth Kara. St. Martin's, \$30 (9781250348227). Oct.

Pulitzer-finalist Kara traces the history of a Dutch slave ship and its harrowing journey from the Netherlands to Africa to Jamaica that sparked a legal drama in England and ignited the abolitionist movement in the U.S.

Continued on p. 7



Focus on True Crime

Art from *The Practice Run*.

Bad to Blue: The True Story of a Chinatown Gangster Turned NYPD Detective.

By **Michael Moy**.

July 2025. 350p. Blackstone, \$28.99 (9798212545945); e-book (9798228003842). 364.

At a pivotal moment, Moy gave up his gang allegiance and joined the NYPD, a fateful decision that was fraught with danger, and one he didn't take lightly. The Police Department was unaware of Moy's former membership in the transnational Fuk Ching gang, and Moy kept a low profile while carrying out his duties as an officer and later as a detective. During his 25-year career, Moy survived the rough-and-tumble Brooklyn streets while fending off the occasional hassles from NYPD Internal Affairs. With survival instincts honed on both sides of the law, he served with distinction and maintained a cool head in order to make it home at the end of every day. In his fascinating and forthright memoir, outlaw turned lawman Moy relates his life story in an unvarnished yet totally engaging manner. An illuminating and inspiring story about how it's never too late to change the direction of one's life. —*Philip Zozzaro*

Bear Witness: The Pursuit of Justice in a Violent Land.

By **Ross Halperin**.

May 2025. 336p. Norton/Liveright, \$31.99 (9781324090786). 364.

Built atop the municipal garbage dump in Tegucigalpa after Hurricane Fifi in 1974, Nueva Suyapa is considered one of the poorest and most dangerous barrios in the Honduran capital. Fed up with the fear that gripped their community, two friends and nonprofit workers, American sociologist Kurt Ver Beek and Honduran schoolteacher Carlos Hernández, banded together to form a secret group to help end the violence and corruption. Their goal was to track down as many witnesses as possible and convince them to testify. In this gripping work of investigative journalism, Halperin examines the risks, sacrifices, and criticisms these unlikely saviors endured in making their neighborhood a safer place to raise a family. Reflecting on the experience, Ver Beek recalls, "We had no idea if it would work, or if we would get ourselves killed. We also had no money, so we were willing to be creative and brave—or, as some would say, a little bit crazy." Halperin's skillful reporting and insight and his own risk-taking make Ver Beek and Hernández's story unforgettable. —*Melanie Dragger*

The Boy from Tiger Bay: A True Story of Murder, Betrayal, and a Fight for Justice.

By **Ceri Jackson**.

May 2025. 336p. Amazon/Little A, paper, \$16.99 (9781662510489); e-book (9781662510496). 364.

On February 14, 1988, 20-year-old Lynette White was brutally murdered in Cardiff, Wales. An investigation led to the arrests of five men: Yusef Abdullahi, John Actie, Ronnie Actie, Stephen Miller, and Tony Paris. A confession from Miller, Lynette White's former boyfriend, made up the bulk of the case, with a lineup of witnesses ready to implicate the men. But all wasn't as clear as it seemed; a few of the men had alibis, and DNA evidence at the scene wasn't a match. Relying on the slimmest of circumstantial evidence, the prosecution succeeded in convicting three of the "Cardiff Five." Within four years, though, the

established version of the crime was upended, yet the accused faced an uphill climb in clearing their names. Welsh journalist Jackson writes a compelling and shocking true narrative. She takes readers from the gritty streets of Tiger Bay's Butetown district to the stultifying interrogation rooms of the South Wales Police headquarters to the courtroom where the Cardiff Five pleaded their innocence and delivers a stunning indictment of a flawed justice system. —*Philip Zozzaro*

★ Chasing Evil: Shocking Crimes, Supernatural Forces, and an FBI Agent's Search for Hope and Justice.

By **Robert Hilland and John Edward**.

Sept. 2025. 368p. St. Martin's Essentials, \$32 (9781250291752); e-book (9781250291769). 364.15.

Though this title is coauthored, it is truly the memoir of Robert "Bob" Hilland's life in and outside of the FBI as he dedicates himself to fighting evil with good. Hilland's story is so unbelievably captivating, it almost doesn't seem real . . . in more ways than one. Beyond working the notorious John Smith serial killer case, Hilland tirelessly served Ground Zero for a year after 9/11, deployed to Afghanistan, investigated corruption in Guyana, and even snagged the Michael Vick confession with his polygraph expertise. Standing beside Hilland every step of the way was John Edward, a notorious medium who became the initially skeptical Hilland's most trusted secret adviser.

Though Hilland questioned Edward's credibility and the mere existence of the occult, he was instantly moved when Edward connected with him on a personal level. Hilland explains how controversial TV personality Edward went on to translate hauntingly specific guidance that allowed him to solve countless cases. Even doubters will appreciate this action-packed memoir. The psychic inclusions are earnest, no efforts are made to convert readers, and the friendship between the two men is touching. True-crime fans and cynics alike won't be able to put this riveting story down. —*Abby McCabe*

L.A. Coroner: Thomas Noguchi and Death in Hollywood.

By **Anne Soon Choi**.

May 2025. 240p. illus. Third State, \$29.95 (9798890130075). 790.

Fans of crime nonfiction will almost certainly know the name of medical examiner Thomas Noguchi. His nickname, "coroner to the stars," was glib but apt; during his career he was involved with the autopsies of such notables as Senator Robert F. Kennedy, Sharon Tate, Natalie Wood, William Holden, Marilyn Monroe, and Janis Joplin. He was the inspiration, or so the story goes, of the 1970s television series *Quincy, M.E.*, and in the 1980s he cowrote a couple of okay-but-not-great crime novels. He also cowrote *Coroner*, a nonfiction account of his career and many of his most famous cases. Historian Choi covers much of the same ground, but she delves much more deeply into the many controversies that followed Noguchi throughout his career and provides a richly revealing biographical dimension, putting Noguchi's professional life in the context of a Japanese American man struggling, in the postwar years, to find a place for himself. Choi's true-crime biog-

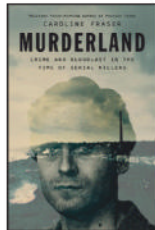
raphy adds much-needed detail and perspective to Noguchi's unusual and compelling story. —David Pitt

★ **Murderland: Crime and Bloodlust in the Time of Serial Killers.**

By Caroline Fraser.

June 2025, 480p. illus. Penguin, \$32 (9780593657225). 364.15232.

Fraser, who examined the life of Laura Ingalls Wilder in the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Prairie Fires* (2017), takes a look at another, much darker aspect of American mythology: the rise of serial killers in the 1970s and '80s. Fraser links this alarming spike—from double digits in the 1940s and '50s to as many as 768 in 1980—to heavy pollution from lead smelting in the mid-twentieth century in the areas of the country where some of the most violent and prolific killers grew up, including Dennis Rader (BTK), Richard Ramirez (the Night Stalker), and Ted Bundy, the killer Fraser follows the most closely. She makes a case that isn't merely convincing; it's downright damning, showing how lead seeped into literally every aspect of life for those who lived near a smelter—and even for those who didn't—via leaded gas and paint. Fraser herself grew up on Mercer Island, across one floating bridge from Seattle, and she wonders, in hindsight, if her father's violent behavior was in any way influenced by the proximity of the Ruston smelter in nearby Tacoma, which is where Bundy grew up. Fraser follows the exploits of the similarly deadly and devastating serial killers and ASARCO (American Smelting and Refining Company) in a narrative that is gripping, harrowing, and timely. —Kristine Huntley



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The Practice Run: How a Failed Art Heist Provided a Blueprint for the World's Largest Art Robbery.

By Frederick J. Fisher.

May 2025, 230p. illus. Rowman & Littlefield, \$34 (9798881805951); e-book (9798881805968). 364.16.

A fake aristocrat, some very real artistic masterworks, and a small-town museum with inadequate security make for an incendiary combination in Fisher's firsthand account. When a young, charismatic man entered the Hyde, a small museum in rural Glens Falls,

New York, in 1981, director Fisher was hesitant to accept his gifts, as Paul Stirling Vanderbilt's declarations of bestowing funds on the Hyde were mixed with concerning specific security inquiries. What follows is the story of two art-world crimes: the one that almost was and the one that still remains officially unsolved. Following the failed attempt at the Hyde, Vanderbilt's true identity—Brian McDevitt, a fledgling con man—is discovered. Nearly a decade later, when thieves walked off with hundreds of millions of dollars worth of artwork from Boston's Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, the similarities between the failed Hyde and the Gardner heists were too much for Fisher to ignore. Mixing true-crime intrigue with his own story of building up the Hyde as a young museum director, *Practice Run* is an engaging read. —Jeff Connelly

★ **V Is for Venom: Agatha Christie's Chemicals of Death.**

By Kathryn Harkup.

June 2025, 320p. Bloomsbury, \$28 (9781399413077). 813.

Agatha Christie had a wonderful way with plots and poisons, according to Harkup, a former chemist and author of *A Is for Arsenic: The Poisons of Agatha Christie* (2015), which was both shortlisted for a Mystery Readers International Macavity Award and recognized for its outstanding contribution to medical literature by the British



Medical Association. This follow-up presents fourteen more letters in the toxicology ABCs, and the Christie tales that showcased the poisons. Chapters include "A Is for Arrow Poison" in "The Case of the Caretaker"; "H Is for Hydrochloric Acid" in *Murder in Mesopotamia*; and the snake-derived "V is for Venom" as deployed in *Death in the Clouds*. Poison was Christie's preferred method of dispatching her victims, and her "toxic choices were perfect," according to Harkup's introduction, which details how Christie came to her in-depth knowledge by serving as a pharmaceutical dispenser during WWI and WWII. Harkup explains chemical compounds and symptoms in a way both fascinating and clear throughout, all the while writing with admiration about how inventive and accurate Christie was in picking her poisons. Readers needn't fear whodunit revelations; Harkup provides spoiler alerts. A must for chemistry buffs and Agatha Christie fans alike. —Connie Fletcher

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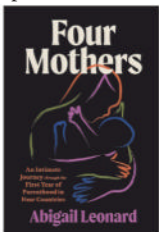
(2021), Lin's second book combines memoir and cultural history that veers from the erudite to the erotic. It's 1996, and Lin, newly graduated from college, is in London pursuing carnal knowledge but instead finding a chaotically dressed British boy who is sweet, sexy, and charming. The two embark on a (very) long-distance relationship. At the same time, the U.S. has passed the Defense of Marriage Act, defining marriage as solely between a man and a woman. Lin intertwines these two at-odds stories of a budding, beautiful, but messy relationship (Lin's boyfriend ultimately lives undocumented in San Francisco) during a time of political upheaval around the very makeup of that relationship. Lin writes sublimely of their early years, moving from one run-down apartment to another, learning each other's bodies and desires, becoming part of a community. While academic tangents on anything from Prop 22 to the Chinese Exclusion Act to homosexuality in ancient Rome can be less engaging, overall, this is another gorgeously written memoir. —Kathy Sexton

★ **Four Mothers: An Intimate Journey through the First Year of Parenthood in Four Countries.**

By Abigail Leonard.

May 2025, 288p. Algonquin, \$30 (9781643756530); e-book (9781643756561). 306.8.

Washington, DC-based foreign news correspondent Leonard, the mother of three young children, started tracking the experiences in 2022 of four women about to give birth in different parts of the world: Japan, Finland, Kenya, and the U.S. She chose middle-class, urban subjects and followed them from the last weeks of their pregnancies through their infants' births and first year. These engaging case studies reveal evolving personal relationships and subjects' physical, emotional, financial, and social circumstances while considering how various societies support new mothers. Despite wide gaps and variances in the amounts of assistance offered by the four mothers' relatives, government programs, social agencies, employers, and insurance plans, similarities emerged. None of them had complete agency over their circumstances, such as birthing



options, healthcare, parental leave, and returning to work. All, meanwhile, reported feelings of isolation and inadequacy and being overwhelmed by fatigue and onslaughts of medical directives and societal expectations. Their stories resonate and reflect current universal demographic trends: changing family structures, more women in the workplace, an increase in single moms. These intriguing, real-life examples provide strong testimony for the need to take better care of our newest and most vulnerable fellow humans. —Kathleen McBroom

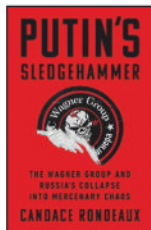
★ **Putin's Sledgehammer: The Wagner Group and Russia's Collapse into Mercenary Chaos.**

By Candace Rondeaux.

May 2025, 464p. PublicAffairs, \$32 (9781541703063); e-book (9781541703087). 355.354.

This book is not for the faint of heart. The violence perpetrated by the Wagner mercenaries in service to their transnational criminal organization, which includes facilitating arms sales and shaking down dictators across Africa and the Middle East for resource extraction rights in exchange for protecting those dictators from their own people, defies a simple description. Public-policy analyst, academic, and writer

Rondeaux chronicles the rise of Wagner as born of political corruption and a shadowy extension of Vladimir Putin's power that provided the Kremlin with plausible deniability for war crimes and other military-adjacent activities. Though the mask comes off after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which brought Wagner out into the open, recruiting scores of prisoners to fight and die on the front lines. Rondeaux zeroes in on Yevgeny Prigozhin, a career criminal whose leadership of Wagner exemplifies the Russian way of war and epitomizes his activities as a driving force of Russian history since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Highly detailed and magnificently written, *Putin's Sledgehammer* has much to offer informed readers while also being accessible and compelling for casual readers. A must-read foreign-affairs title. —James Pekoll



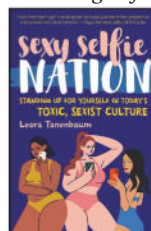
★ **Sexy Selfie Nation: Standing up for Yourself in Today's Toxic, Sexist Culture.**

By Leora Tanenbaum.

May 2025. 240p. Rowman & Littlefield, \$27.95

(9781538194003); e-book (9781538194010). 305.3.

Tanenbaum (*I Am Not a Slut: Slut-Shaming in the Age of the Internet*, 2015) tackles an immensely important subject with this enlightening, surprising, and thoroughly researched consideration of young women, clothing, and sexual objectification. In compelling chapters with first person interviews, references to academic studies and general media coverage, as well as the author's own astute observations, Tanenbaum considers the societal minefield girls and young women must navigate simply by getting dressed. In reviewing gendered school dress codes, which demoralize and intimidate, she notes the particular targeting of young women of color, and how teens have smartly tested that reality by shifting identical clothes from white to Black bodies and tracking the different response. From the prosaic (choosing to wear tank tops when it's hot) to the specific (selecting color and style for an emotional lift on difficult days), her subjects run up against disapproval from family, school officials, and strangers who feel qualified to comment, castigate, and judge their clothing choices. Citing court cases and real-life situations from middle school to the Olympics, plus the risks behind "sexy selfies" and the long-term degradation wrought by image-based sexual abuse (chiefly "revenge porn"), Tanenbaum's work is great in scope but intimate in execution. Outstanding. —Colleen Mondor



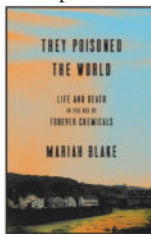
YA: Older YAs will find Tanenbaum's perspective on sexual objectification enlightening and inspiring, but should take care to consider the ramifications of career choices related to owning one's sexuality. CM.

★ **They Poisoned the World: Life and Death in the Age of Forever Chemicals.**

By Mariah Blake.

May 2025. 320p. Crown, \$30 (9781524760090); e-book (9781524760113). 363.3.

Chemical companies taking advantage of their power and wealth to promote products despite their adverse effects on the lives of those in their midst is a topic for investigative journalists that unfortunately shows no sign of waning. Blake writes here of the chemical industry and its poisoning of the water in the small upstate New York town of Hoosick Falls, home to a Teflon plant. While some of the details about forever chemicals may now be familiar, the lengths to which Teflon producer DuPont and other companies went to avoid taking responsibility for their damage to Hoosick Falls is nothing less than devastating. Blake documents in great detail the efforts of several locals impacted by the poisoning to prove DuPont's culpability and pursue damages. Their single-minded determination extracted an enormous personal price, but they persevered to reach a significant settlement. In telling their story, Blake also discusses previous lawsuits, including the one documented by lawyer Robert Bilott in *Exposure* (2019). (Bilott's exploits also play into this narrative.) Impeccably researched and outrageous both in the scope of the company's malfeasance and the efforts of those who support it, the narrative never strays from its relentless documentation of the generational price paid for our decades of lax regulation. A must-read. —Colleen Mondor



We All Want to Change the World: My Journey through Social Justice Movements from the 1960s to Today. By Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Raymond Obstfeld.

May 2025. 320p. Crown, \$30 (9780593735107); e-book (9780593735114). 323.1.

Writer and retired NBA star Abdul-Jabbar (*Coach Wooden and Me*, 2017) delivers a compelling book that seamlessly blends his decades-long basketball career and his long-standing dedication to social justice. Along the way, he meditates on the history of social justice movements and his first-hand experience fighting for equality from the 1960s to today. Drawing on extensive research in addition to his lived experience, Abdul-Jabbar dedicates each chapter to a different movement—free speech, civil rights, antiwar, women's liberation, gay liberation—and provides little-known details about what went on behind the scenes. His analyses of past struggles highlight how these efforts laid the groundwork for modern activism while encouraging readers to continue the fight against injustice. Fans of books by athletes-turned-activists, such as Tommie Smith's *Silent Gesture* (2007) and John Carlos' *The John Carlos Story* (2011), will enjoy Abdul-Jabbar's

insightful historical account of social justice movements and his inspiring call to get involved and make a difference. —Katie Pomeroy

HD **HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY:** Abdul-Jabbar is a legend on the court and on library shelves, and readers will be excited to read his first-hand take on continuously relevant recent history.

YA/S: Abdul-Jabbar's name recognition will resonate with younger basketball fans and activists interested in the history of social movements. KF.

What My Father and I Don't Talk About: Sixteen Writers Break the Silence.

Ed. by Michele Filgate.

May 2025. 320p. Simon & Schuster, \$29.99 (9781668049655). 306.874.

As she did in the best-selling *What My Mother and I Don't Talk About* (2019), journalist and writing instructor Filgate gathers 16 spellbinding essays on parental relationships treasured and troubled, frustrating and fascinating. Kelly McMasters hasn't seen anything as beautiful as her lawn-hating, spiritual-gardener father's golf swing. For every end of innocence or other sad ending, there's a celebratory one: Nayomi Munaweera's parents' divorce after a fraught 50-year-marriage; Jordan Castle's realization that saying goodbye to her father would "preserve us like a handprint in cement." After much literary searching, questions do remain. Alex Marzano-Lesnevich wonders if it was cute that their dad demanded the first lick of his kids' ice cream cones or "a reminder that everything we had belonged to him." Joanna Rakoff, learning the truth about long-accepted family history, asks what falsehoods she's passing along to her own children and if they'll forgive her. These fearless essays, each one unputdownable, are likely to reassure readers that whatever relationship they have or don't have with their own fathers is just right. —Annie Bostrom

Business

Little Bosses Everywhere: How the Pyramid Scheme Shaped America.

By Bridget Read.

May 2025. 368p. Crown, \$30 (9780593443927); e-book (9780593443934). 658.8.

Journalist Read takes a deep dive into the world of multilevel marketing (MLM), a "unique type of person-to-person commerce" that, today, has 6.7 million participants. She delivers a well-researched book outlining the history of MLMs and their impact on the people involved. She journeys into vitamin, wine, and soap sales, exploring the tactics of well-known companies like Mary Kay, Herbalife, and Amway. The book also explores how MLMs often prey on those who are looking for quick financial independence. It delves into the legality of this system and why it prevails today. Readers will understand why this model tends to fall apart for MLM members due to low sales and inability to recruit people

into the system. Interwoven throughout is a first-hand account from MLM participant Monique, who ultimately spent \$75,000 selling Mary Kay cosmetics over 8 years while only making \$5,000 in sales and commissions. Her story is a cautionary tale of the allure of MLMs and the too-frequent negatives. This book will be intriguing to readers who want to understand the why and learn how to avoid an MLM “opportunity” for themselves. —*Jennifer Adams*

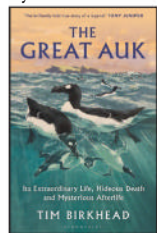
Science

The Great Auk: Its Extraordinary Life, Hideous Death and Mysterious Afterlife.

By Tim Birkhead.

June 2025. 288p. illus. Bloomsbury/Sigma, \$28 (9781399415743); e-book (9781399415736). 598.3.

The great auk, one of the most well-known extinct birds, is brought back to life in the inimitable prose of renowned ornithologist Birkhead (*Birds and Us*, 2022). Fascinated by birds and the history of ornithology, the author learned of a great auk egg that a former egg collector was repairing. This chance encounter led him to track the fate of missing great auk specimens (only 75 skins and 78 eggs remain) and dig into what was known of the species before the last two were killed in 1844.



The first section of the book presents Birkhead's investigations into what is known of the natural history of the great auk. The author describes in intricate detail the seabird's breeding colonies and relationships between great auk pairs and other birds, drawing both from historical notes and from the bird's closest living relatives. The second section offers plenty of adventures, illicit high-finance arrangements, and cloak-and-dagger escapades as collectors and dealers covered great auk eggs and specimens. Full of period detail, quotations from letters and journals, photographs, and drawings, this wonderful blend of human and avian history is an absorbing look at a lamentably lost bird and its legacy. —*Nancy Bent*

Ocean: Earth's Last Wilderness.

By David Attenborough and Colin Butfield.

May 2025. 272p. illus. Grand Central, \$34 (9781538772294); e-book (9781538772317). 551.46.

Attenborough takes a deep dive into the ocean in this text that coincides with the release of a documentary film of the same name as well as the author's ninety-ninth birthday. Having witnessed incredible advances in technology in his lifetime while also observing both mass extinctions and spectacular recoveries of species and ocean communities, Attenborough offers a fascinating perspective. The first section of the book offers a snapshot of the lifetime of a

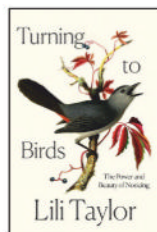
single blue whale; the second section profiles eight different ocean habitats, including coral reefs, kelp forests, and mangroves; and the final section contemplates what is possible regarding the ocean in a single human generation. A wealth of personal stories and first-hand interviews lend an immediacy to the text. The writing is compelling, conveying the excitement of discovery while also being both mindful of the perils facing oceans and optimistic about what science has already accomplished, including the restoration of mangroves and kelp forests. Dynamic and informative, this text is a robust introduction to the habitats of the ocean and what their future might hold. —*Maren Ostergard*

Turning to Birds: The Power and Beauty of Noticing.

By Lili Taylor.

May 2025. 208p. illus. Crown, \$30 (9780593728574); e-book (9780593728581). 598.2.

Actress Taylor started to become aware of birds in a deeper way when she took a sabbatical from acting. During this time of personal quiet she started to hear birds not just as generic chirps but as stories of what was going on in her yard. As she says, no matter where one is, there is usually a bird to watch, and she began to delve into just paying attention, a skill she applies not only to bird watching and acting but to life in general. In a series of lively essays, Taylor dives into her experiences with birds and birding. A festival billed as the Biggest Week in American Birding in Ohio starts us off, and Taylor takes the reader along on her journey of discovery. Whether it's taking in the myriad of blues on a blue jay, showing a passing Brooklynite a downy woodpecker, judging bird tattoos at a festival (and thereby discovering the cedar waxwing), meeting a chimney swift counter, or setting up feeders at filming sites, Taylor (now on the boards of the American Birding Association and the National Audubon Society) is a wonderful ambassador for our feathered kin. —*Nancy Bent*



Technology

The Big Hop: The First Nonstop Flight across the Atlantic Ocean and into the Future.

By David Rooney.

June 2025. 336p. Norton, \$29.99 (9781324050964). 629.130.

Born in 1889 to a hardworking family, Harry Hawker possessed an affinity for gadgets and mechanical work. He was fascinated by the nascent aviation industry but felt confined at home in Australia. He moved to England and met kindred spirit Tom Sopwith. England became a hive of innovation, with Hawker, Sopwith, and other prospective aviators working on planes and competing to break

records for the longest time aloft. While some viewed the potential of air travel as benevolent, newsmen such as Alfred Harmsworth saw aircraft as a weapon of war—a suspicion confirmed as WWI dawned, and the world witnessed the first instance of aerial combat. With the war's end, that competitive flying spirit returned, and pilots raced to make history by being the first to traverse the Atlantic Ocean. *The Big Hop* is a fascinating look at the people who risked everything to achieve immortality through flight. Rooney (*About Time*, 2021) offers an altogether informative and entertaining history that chronicles some of the lesser-known personalities who made significant contributions to the field of aviation. —*Philip Zozzaro*

Johannes Gutenberg: A Biography in Books.

By Eric Marshall White.

June 2025. 224p. illus. Reaktion, \$25 (9781836390398). 686.2092.

When *Time* magazine proclaimed Johannes Gutenberg the “Man of the Millennium” in 2000, he seemed an obvious choice. The man credited with inventing the movable-type printing press demonstrated the potential of widely disseminating information with the production of his famous Bible in the 1450s, arguably paving the way for the Renaissance, Reformation, and Enlightenment. Yet as White makes clear in this informative study, Gutenberg's legacy was not always assured and is at least partially overstated. Several contemporaries had strong claims for inventing movable-type printing, or at least quickly improving upon it. This narrative also discounts both the inventors in China who printed books using woodblocks seven centuries before Gutenberg was born and the block-printed Arabic scrolls that date from the tenth century, which were likely known in Germany in Gutenberg's time. White meticulously describes the printing process, and the text is packed with reprints of astounding manuscript pages. It is likely that the technology would have been invented and expanded had Gutenberg never lived, yet his profound impact on human history cannot be denied. —*Bill Kelly*

Child Care

The #1 Dad Book: Be the Best Dad You Can Be—In 1 Hour.

By James Patterson.

May 2025. 192p. Little, Brown, \$25 (9780316585071). 649.1.

The prolific Patterson “talked to lots of experts, and lots of dads, and lots of experts who are also dads” to compile this pithy, low-stress guide to being a better father, written in brief chapters as befits the amount of time a new father probably has to read a book on fatherhood (i.e., not much). Patterson suggests hugging a lot and embracing the messiness of dirty diapers and slimy shirts; reading to your kids until they are old enough to read to you (and here he includes

some book suggestions); being consistent and listening; finding dad friends and fostering intergenerational relationships; and showing affection to your partner in front of your kids (“Saying ‘I love you’ is not a sign of weakness”). Funny and wise (“You want meanness in your house even less than you want rodents. Unless you just got suckered into having a pet hamster. Rookie mistake.”), this book will appeal to overwhelmed new dads looking for some reinforcement that they’re doing okay. —*Susan Maguire*



HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: Even Patterson’s nonfiction books are highly sought after, and his dad-readers will appreciate important advice from a trusted source.

Health & Medicine

The Brain at Rest: How the Art and Science of Doing Nothing Can Improve Your Life.

By Joseph Jebelli.

June 2025. 288p. Dutton, \$32 (9780593474648); e-book (9780593474655). 616.8.

The human brain is an extremely busy organ, consuming 20 percent of the body’s energy. Neuroscientist Jebelli wholeheartedly recommends deliberate periods of idleness or inactivity to give the brain some rest and improve overall health. He focuses on activating the intrinsic default mode network of the brain (DMN) by allowing the mind to roam free (daydreaming, spacing out), which can lead to decreased stress, increased productivity, less burnout, and more creativity. Jebelli’s practical tips abound, ranging from sensible to slightly strange and even silly. “Spend at least twenty minutes a day staring blankly into space,” he suggests. Other advice includes taking more baths than showers, listening to sad music, hugging a tree whenever possible, and napping one half-hour daily. He also considers the dangers of overworking, benefits of immersion in nature, rewards of sleep and exercise, and harmfulness of multitasking. Spending time in solitude or silence seems good for brain fitness. The adage (attributed to both John Lennon and Bertrand Russell) “Time you enjoy wasting is not wasted time” appears tantalizingly relevant to brain well-being. —*Tony Miksaneck*

An Exercise in Uncertainty: A Memoir of Illness and Hope.

By Jonathan Gluck.

June 2025. 304p. Harmony, \$28.99 (9780593735787); e-book (9780593735794). 616.99.

It seemed innocuous at the time. Healthy, 37 years old, journalist Gluck slipped on some ice and twisted his hip in 2002. About a year later, lingering pain prompted his visit to a doctor, and an MRI scan revealed a tumor. The diagnosis was multiple myeloma, a relatively rare cancer from malignant plasma cells in bone marrow. Gluck chronicles his transformation into a “cancer zombie,” a

person “permanently half sick and half well.” His treatments included targeted radiation therapy, chemotherapy, and immunotherapy. “Because cancer is a nuclear bomb, not a conventional weapon, the fallout is widespread,” Gluck writes. Adverse effects both physical and emotional arise from the myeloma and its treatment. He eloquently communicates his fear, self-pity, “catastrophizing,” frustrating hassles with medical insurance, and chronic sense of uncertainty because of his condition. He also embraces the love, joy, and sense of accomplishment associated with his two children, his professional writing career, and the sport of fly-fishing. As a cancer survivor, Gluck believes he is still alive “because of science,” but he emphasizes the immeasurable value of hope. —*Tony Miksaneck*

Cookery

Baking across America: A Vintage Recipe Roadtrip.

By B. Dylan Hollis.

May 2025. 320p. illus. DK, \$37.99 (9780744097603); e-book (9780744097610). 641.8.

Social media personality and author Hollis (*Baking Yesteryear*, 2023) is sure to incite lots of arguments about the assigned hometowns for the 100 goodies he chronicles in this road trip of American baking. Why does Maine get whoopie pies? Can Georgia really “own” hush puppies? And have Chicago bakeries truly embraced the atomic cake (with its combination of banana, yellow, and chocolate layers)? Questions may also be raised about why some states get more straightforward carbohydrates as opposed to desserts, such as Utah’s sunshine granola and Nebraska’s meaty stuffed bread called runza. Extra points to readers already familiar with giant Joe Froggers cookies (Massachusetts) and possum pie (Arkansas). Quibbles and jokes aside, Hollis has assembled a truly roadworthy collection of American foodstuffs from all 50 states, organized by region: Northeast, South, Midwest, and West, with further subdivisions. Complete instructions, ingredient tips, and great photographs entice, as do Hollis’ notes about Missouri’s dirt cake, Pittsburgh’s strawberry pretzel salad, Maryland’s berger cookies, and many more. Let the coast-to-coast baking contests begin! —*Barbara Jacobs*

Entertaining 101: 101 Recipes Every Host Should Know How to Make.

By Beth Le Manach.

June 2025. 272p. illus. DK, \$35 (9780593844847); e-book (9780593844854). 642.

Readers may recognize Le Manach from her YouTube channel, *Entertaining with Beth*, where the home chef shows off professional-level entertaining skills. In addition to recipes, the author’s first cookbook offers readers entertaining techniques, tips for awkward situations, and meal plans for many occasions. Le Manach does so many things well, starting readers off with some

ground rules, like not overdoing the guest list, prepping wisely, and practicing self-care as you set up to entertain. She also goes into detail on table setting and suggests investing in classic pieces that can be reused for any occasion rather than buying dinnerware for every holiday and season. Recipes include grilled Dijon chicken with charred lemons, beef stew, roasted ratatouille, pumpkin pie tart, and lemon bars. Each one includes notes, tips, pairing suggestions, make-ahead notes, and menu plans for occasions like a fall party, Thanksgiving dinner, Christmas dinner, and more. Anyone who enjoys cooking and bringing people together will find this book a must-have. —*Natasha Culler*

Kitchens of Hope: Immigrants Share Stories of Resilience and Recipes from Home.

By Linda S. Svitak and others.

June 2025. 240p. illus. Univ. of Minnesota, \$29.95

(9781517919122); e-book (9781452972923). 641.5.

This cookbook is a much-needed salute to immigrants in Minnesota and the cultural and culinary talents they bring. Representing more than 30 countries, from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe, the 60-plus recipes range from the familiar to the not so common (e.g., Moroccan chicken pastilla and Mongolian buuz dumplings). Stories of resilience and hope populate this treasury, whether the tales of individuals fleeing from violence and war or those searching for opportunities. Profiles of contributors reveal many lawyers, food-industry professionals, and even the owner of a waffle factory. Profits from the book will raise funds for the state’s Advocates of Human Rights organization, which offers legal help to people seeking asylum. Readers will want to take time to thoroughly read the inspiring anecdotes, and especially those based in Minneapolis-St. Paul will appreciate Svitak’s recommendations for further resources. —*Barbara Jacobs*

The Last Sweet Bite: Stories and Recipes of Culinary Heritage Lost and Found.

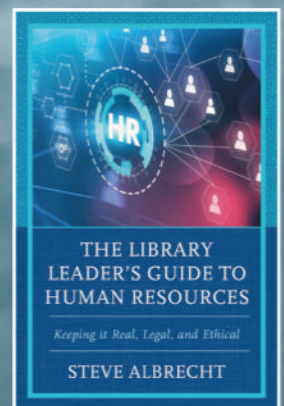
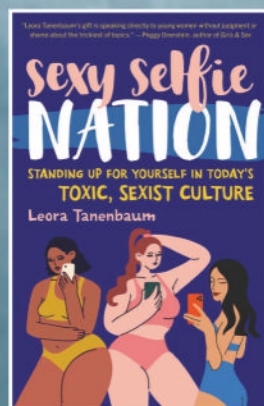
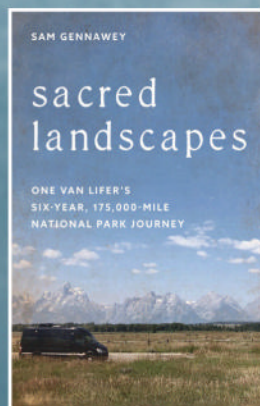
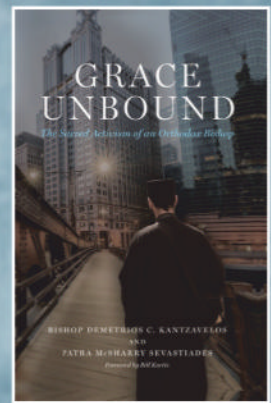
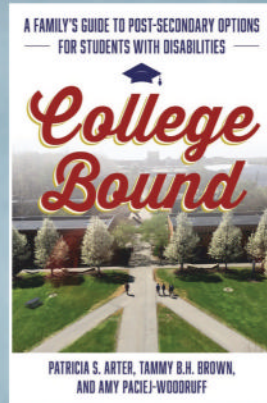
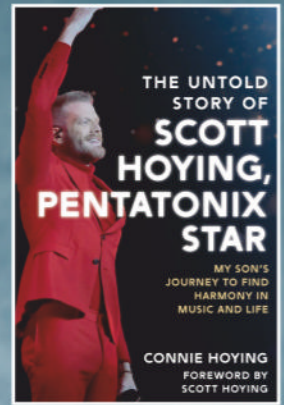
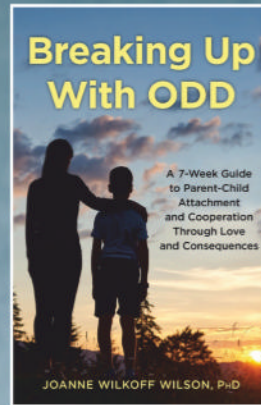
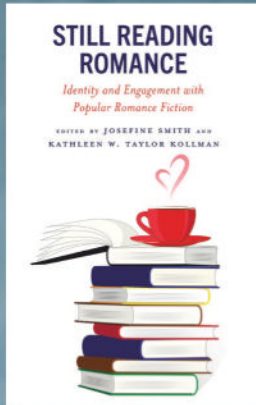
By Michael Shaikh.

June 2025. 320p. illus. Crown, \$30 (9780593442845);

e-book (9780593442852). 641.59.

War and power struggles continue to ravage religious and ethnic minorities worldwide, threatening to extinguish not only people but their food. Human rights investigator Shaikh builds a narrative based on years of work and meaningful conversations with those from a postcommunist Czech Republic, people of the Eelam Tamil diaspora, Rohingyas displaced in Bangladesh, Uyghurs, Bolivians looking to preserve coca, and the Indigenous Pueblo Nations people residing in New Mexico. The tales share overarching similarities in lives and food rituals threatened by colonization and greed, but it’s the more personal stories that will draw readers in. The author assures Maryam, for instance, that her traditional Rohingya goru ghuso (beef curry) tastes incredible over her laments that “the ingredients aren’t fresh. They’re grown

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with pesticides here” in Bangladesh, unlike in Maryam’s homeland of Myanmar. Shaikh’s sources speak to the human spirit, encouraging persistence when hope is not in abundance. This is a heavy book, reminding readers of ongoing wars and displacement, peppered with distinctive recipes that lighten the load. —*Jessica S. Levy*

The Arts

Art above Everything: One Woman’s Global Exploration of the Joys and Torments of a Creative Life.

By **Stephanie Elizondo Griest**.

June 2025. 272p. Beacon, \$30 (9780807020418); e-book (9780807020425). 709.22.

In this travel guide along the artist’s path, Elizondo Griest takes readers on a global tour of creative struggle and transcendence, from a devout dance collective in India to an opulent mall in Qatar. Driving this vehicle is the question: is art enough? For Elizondo Griest, after speaking with 70 women in 12 countries, the answer is always yes—and that it’s impossible to pursue art without sacrifice. For all artists, there is the expense of “an infinity of hours” and, for most, money. For women, there are additional costs (like delaying children), which Elizondo Griest sensitively recalls from her own life and the lives of fellow artists. No matter their place, these women find freedom through their work. They tell stories and paint and belly dance through loneliness, pain, and censorship. Readers may wish they’d had this guide at the start of their own journeys, but it’s never too late to be reminded that yes, the road is impossible, and no, you’re not on it alone. A new kind of travel writing. —*Amanda Dee*

★ **Burning Down the House: Talking Heads and the New York Scene That Transformed Rock.**

By **Jonathan Gould**.

June 2025. 512p. illus. Mariner, \$35 (9780063022980); e-book (9780063023000). 782.42.

Gould (*Oris Redding*, 2017) begins at the moment in June 1975, when Talking Heads made their professional debut on the stage of CBGB, a seedy nightclub on Manhattan’s Lower East Side. Their look was ordinary (“unremarkable haircuts” and “casual clothes”), and their performance that night not particularly memorable.

What did stand out was odd singer-guitarist David Byrne and the disquieting songs that reflected his unusual demeanor (“his upper body jerking and jiggling like a shadow puppet”). From the start, the band knew what they wanted and didn’t want: no drama, no fancy stage clothes, no rock star poses. When Talking Heads emerged on the New York underground scene, the city was in dire financial straits and undergoing deep urban decay,

while, ironically, arts like music, poetry, and theater were thriving. This is a finely detailed history of the musical evolution of a band that defined an era. Gould not only critiques Talking Heads albums but discusses solo works and film documentaries, including the blockbuster concert film, *Stop Making Sense* (his description of Byrne’s Big Suit captures the joy, creativity, and absurdity of the image). Gould also finds fascinating parallels between Byrne and John Lennon, both outsiders unique in pop music. A masterful achievement. —*June Sawyers*

The Dad Rock That Made Me a Woman.

By **Niko Stratis**.

May 2025. 240p. Univ. of Texas, \$27.95 (9781477331484). 782.42166092.

“I knew what I was supposed to be, and I knew the version of myself lying in secret, this screaming pit inside me where I threw the queerest parts of my soul to hide away.” In her debut, Stratis effortlessly blends memoir and music history to tell the story of growing up transgender in the Canadian Yukon in the 1980s and ’90s, using songs by artists like Wilco, Sheryl Crow, The Wallflowers, and R.E.M. as a mirror for her own feelings during defining moments. Stratis recounts her early memories of her father, a quiet man who listened to mixtapes through headphones after spending his days working as a glazier, a career path that Stratis would also embrace before coming out as trans in her thirties. She goes on to redefine what the term “dad rock” means to her, casting off its negative associations and showing how music became a lifeline for her. Fans of books like Laura Jane Grace’s *Kill Me Loudly* (2015) will enjoy Stratis’ honest reflections on the lifesaving power of music. —*Katie Pomeroy*

★ **Desi Arnaz: The Man Who Invented Television.**

By **Todd S. Purdum**.

June 2025. 368p. Simon & Schuster, \$29.99 (9781668023068); e-book (9781668023082). 791.45.

Purdum gives gifted performer and comedian Arnaz his due as a savvy businessman who helped to shape the landscape of the early days of television. Born into a wealthy family in Cuba in 1917, Arnaz was forced to flee the country in his teens after his father fell out of favor following the 1933 Cuban Revolution. The ever-enterprising Arnaz turned to music to support himself in Miami, bringing Latin music traditions to American audiences. When musical-theater success brought him to Los Angeles to film the movie *Too Many Girls*, Arnaz met and fell deeply in love with Lucille Ball, who would become his wife and business partner. After not finding the success they’d hoped for in the film industry, Arnaz and Ball turned to the emerging small-screen business, conceiving the seminal 1950s comedy *I Love Lucy*, which

would not only revolutionize television and create the multi-camera format but also make Arnaz and Ball one of the most famous television couples in history. Though the strain of running their empire, along with his drinking and womanizing, eventually cost Arnaz his marriage, his legacy is forever and undeniable. Purdum does a bang-up job of spotlighting Arnaz’s many vital contributions to television history in this lively and engaging biography. —*Kristine Huntley*

YA/S: *Teens with an interest in television history will find this fascinating, especially if they’ve seen I Love Lucy. KH.*

★ **Hit Girls: Britney, Taylor, Beyoncé, and the Women Who Built Pop’s Shiniest Decade.**

By **Nora Princiotti**.

June 2025. 240p. Ballantine, \$29 (9780593725085); e-book (9780593725092). 782.42.

Princiotti, staff writer at *The Ringer* and host of the *Every Single Album* podcast, explores how major technological and social shifts in the 2000s shaped modern pop music, with female artists at the forefront. This compelling study is both a deep cultural analysis and a “love letter to those millennial middle school jams

we’re still scream-singing at wedding receptions.” Princiotti highlights that the aughts remain the only decade in U.S. music history when women comprised over half of the 25 top-grossing artists. Yet while these women dominated, they were also confined by rigid industry expectations—ones they worked tirelessly to dismantle. Each chapter examines an artist’s impact, weaving insightful analysis with vivid storytelling. In “How Taylor Swift Invented the Internet,” Princiotti traces Swift’s early MySpace strategy, illustrating how she pioneered the intimate, interactive fan-artist dynamic that defines modern pop. In “When Rihanna Met Reverb,” she credits Rihanna as the essential catalyst for EDM’s mainstream explosion, leveraging new digital tools like Auto-Tune and GarageBand to become the “beating heart thumping at the center of the dance floor.” Princiotti’s writing is celebratory and incisive, blending the enthusiasm of a superfan with the precision of a critic. A must-read for pop music lovers. —*Freda Love Smith*

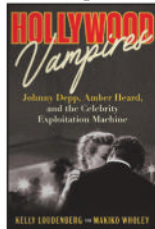
★ **Hollywood Vampires: Johnny Depp, Amber Heard, and the Celebrity Exploitation Machine.**

By **Kelly Loudenberg and Makiko Wholey**.

June 2025. 352p. Morrow/Dey St., \$29.99 (9780063333819); e-book (9780063333833). 791.430922.

The highly publicized legal showdown between former spouses Johnny Depp and Amber Heard was contentious and fraught. Investigative journalists Loudenberg and Wholey, who covered the trial in real time, aim to offer deeper nuance for both par-

ties. Through interviews with those closest to the couple and their legal teams, readers will find tragic Shakespearean characters on both sides of the courtroom. The book starts with the actors' early lives and relationship. Both were raised in homes with abusive, alcoholic parents, and their courtship, from all



accounts, was loaded with toxicity. Only Depp and Heard know the extent of what went on behind closed doors, but there is much to explore about their dynamic and how it was used to uphold simple public narratives—what happened between the two doesn't mesh with the black-and-white dichotomies of abuse our society understands. Very public trials in the UK and U.S. unfolded in the aftermath of the #MeToo movement, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, all of which influenced the events in a myriad of known and unknown ways. If it's unclear what future generations will see when they look back on this case and time in history, Loudenberg and Wholey offer a much sharper picture for all.

—Courtney Eathorne

Loud and Clear: The Grateful Dead's Wall of Sound and the Quest for Audio Perfection.

By Brian Anderson.

June 2025. 368p. illus. St. Martin's, \$32 (9781250319678); e-book (9781250319685). 782.4216.

Journalist Anderson tells the captivating story of the Grateful Dead's legendary stack of speakers, which reached its peak in 1974 as a towering, three-story structure spanning 100 feet and weighing 75 tons. Built to deliver crystal clear sound at staggering volumes, the Wall reflected the Dead's commitment to eliminating all sonic separation between band and audience. Its size and complexity required four trucks and a crew of 40 to assemble and operate it, making the Wall an awe-inspiring but ultimately unsustainable project. Anderson draws on extensive interviews with sound engineers, musicians, and Deadheads to trace the Wall's rise and fall. Central to the story is Owsley "Bear" Stanley, the engineering genius and LSD-fueled visionary whose relentless drive helped bring the Wall to life. Despite its short lifespan, the Wall left a legacy in live music. Innovations like Janet Furman's pre-amp equalizer, now a standard in professional recording equipment, is one of an impressive list of technological advances that arose from the Dead's experiment. Anderson's detailed account captures both the technical brilliance and the cultural significance of this groundbreaking sound system. —Freda Love Smith

Threads of Empire: A History of the World in Twelve Carpets.

By Dorothy Armstrong.

June 2025. 368p. St. Martin's, \$33 (9781250321435); e-book (9781250321442). 746.

Like the multifaceted jewels to which they

are so often compared, the multihued and intricately patterned carpets originating from various locations and eras throughout the world are among history's most coveted but arguably least-understood artifacts. Cultural historian and carpet expert Armstrong highlights 12 significant examples of this ancient fiber artistry, tying the time periods of their production and provenance to the prevailing ruling empires. From the burial mounds of fifth-century BCE warlords to the conference theaters of twentieth-century leaders adjudicating post-WWII, carpets have played both functional and symbolic roles, serving as signifiers of wealth, stealth, power, and piety. Definitively affixing the origin stories of such treasures is a slippery task, and Armstrong's meticulous research anchors the exhaustive and sometimes circuitous path such investigations assume. While emperors and priests may have desired them, the carpets themselves were produced by the lowliest members of their societies. Armstrong's gift is to humanize the talented artisans, including women, children, and enslaved people, whose patience and dexterity created indelible works preserved for posterity. —Carol Haggas

Warhol's Muses: The Artists, Misfits, and Superstars Destroyed by the Factory Fame Machine.

By Laurence Leamer.

May 2025. 336p. Penguin/G. P. Putnam's Sons, \$32 (9780593716663). 700.92.

Hell-bent on becoming a celebrity like those he portrayed on his silk screens, Andy Warhol attentively studied socialites and commercials to learn how to sell an American image of himself. Almost always using a camera or recorder as mediator, Warhol acted as if everyone else was an image that could be manipulated or exploited. "He democratized the idea of celebrity while diminishing it," writes Leamer in this immersion into the history of Warhol's studio/club/shelter, the Factory, and all who were reflected in and distorted by its silver-foiled walls. Leamer reframes Warhol's biography to include the 10 women who, while refashioned and often renamed, helped craft the artist's image as they joined the Factory between 1965 and 1971. No prior knowledge is required to appreciate Leamer's tales of the unforgettable "Superstars"—Baby Jane Holzer, Edie Sedgwick, Nico, Ultra Violet, Viva, Brigid Berlin, Ingrid Superstar, International Velvet, Mary Woronov, and Candy Darling. None entered without serious baggage, and few left unscathed. Warhol may have contributed to the democratization of art, but Leamer makes clear the consequences of treating people like art objects. —Amanda Dee

We Might Just Make It after All: My Best Friendship with Kate Spade.

By Elyce Arons.

June 2025. 304p. Gallery, \$28.99 (9781668069073). 746.92.

Readers indulging in the resurgence of *Sex and the City* will adore this memoir, which

celebrates female friendships against the backdrop of the 1990s New York City fashion scene. The loving essence of friendship reverberates throughout as Arons recounts her life alongside her best friend, the late Kate Spade. Their bond, formed in the early days of college, endured a business partnership and life changes, until Spade died by suicide in 2018. Sharing love for each other led to sharing love for their Kate Spade accessories brand as they faced the challenges of sexism and the impostor syndrome together while launching in New York. Readers interested in the fashion industry and entrepreneurship will feel emboldened by Arons' persistence and success. The brand itself, known for its accessible designer handbags, embodied attainable luxury for young, professional women like its creators. Just as consumers identified with Kate Spade, readers will connect with Arons' account of her rural Kansas beginnings and be inspired to follow their dreams and never be afraid to pivot regarding one's location, job, or relationships. —Abby McCabe

Crafts & Hobbies

Creative Modern Crochet for the Home: Stunning Projects Using Simple Techniques.

By Lucy Djedvet.

May 2025. 112p. illus. Search, paper, \$19.95 (9781800922204); e-book (9781800932029). 746.43.

An ingenious combination of crochet, macramé, and weaving makes these 12 home projects pop. Known online as @craftingbylucy, UK-based crochet designer Djedvet goes into great detail on up-front matters in her first book, with a review of materials and tools, in-depth looks at stitch anatomy and special stitches, and notes about the intricacies of related-to-crochet activities. The dozen unique projects include a raffia lamp shade, a versatile and sturdy jute rug, and a blanket. High-quality color photographs of both individual steps and finished products are included, along with instructions and the usual features, such as skill level, gauge/tension, approximate time needed, and making up. Many of the yarns specified are higher-end, and substitutions may not be readily available. Fans of any of the crafts Djedvet combines here may need to add another hobby to the list! —Barbara Jacobs

The Knitting Companion.

By Morgane Mathieu.

June 2025. 160p. illus. Search, \$16.95 (9781800922600); e-book (9781800932593). 746.43.

For newcomers intimidated by the likes of the trusted manual *Vogue Knitting: The Ultimate Knitting Book* (2018), French author Mathieu offers a kinder, gentler, and much less imposing introduction. The content is mostly rudimentary: needs, choices for yarn, pattern, and measurements; basic knitting techniques; and finishing and sewing together. What stands out are Mathieu's instructions for read-

ing a chart (as it's a fact there is no standard chart or symbols), her tips and tricks (for example, don't change your needles or brands of yarn midstream!), and the pros and cons she offers for different alternatives in construction, casting on, and the like. Illustrations and photographs are spot-on, especially in the more difficult how-to's, such as those for finishing and sewing. Includes table of stitch-to-row ratios. —*Barbara Jacobs*

Sports & Recreation

★ **The American Game: History and Hope in the Country of Lacrosse.**

By S. L. Price.

May 2025. 560p. illus. Atlantic Monthly, \$30 (9780802164735); e-book (9780802164742). 796.34.

Veteran sportswriter Price, author of the acclaimed *Playing through the Whistle* (2016), focuses his investigative prowess on the state of lacrosse and its tenuous relationship to Indigenous people of North America. Lacrosse is America's oldest team sport, originating with the Haudenosaunee, or Iroquois people, in what now is New York and areas in Canada. The narrative revolves around the 2018 world championships, which included the Iroquois Nationals, and Price meticulously elaborates on players past and present, social issues surrounding the game, and the racism that has plagued the sport throughout its history and persists today. Brimming with profiles of players and revolutionary coaches as well as match highlights, *The American Game* weaves the history and struggles of Indigenous and minority players of the not-so-distant past with the present state of a game that is the fastest growing sport in the U.S. Price details the efforts of those who worked to broaden the appeal of the sport and move it away from its collegiate elitism and misogyny. A thorough and honest accounting of a sport with a checkered past but promising future, this book should be mandatory reading for every lacrosse player, parent, and coach. —*Craig Clark*

Baddest Man: The Making of Mike Tyson.

By Mark Kriegel.

June 2025. 448p. illus. Penguin, \$32 (9780735223400); e-book (9780735223417). 796.83.

One of the most infamous boxers in history, Mike Tyson has fascinated the public for decades. Becoming the youngest heavyweight champion in the world took hard work and determination, and Tyson didn't do it all by himself. Author, journalist, and ESPN boxing commentator Kriegel, who chronicled the life of boxer Ray Mancini in *The Good Son* (2012), focuses Tyson's biography on the people and places that made Tyson who he is, culminating in his fight against Michael Spinks in 1988. This book doesn't shy away from discussing

Tyson's violent and abhorrent behavior, especially towards women, but it also shows how he was affected and altered by a traumatic childhood. Themes of race, power, and wealth are prevalent in Tyson's life, especially when others, realizing his potential, began making decisions on his behalf. Love him or hate him, Tyson's story is interesting, and Kriegel highlights the man behind his public persona. An obvious choice for Tyson fans and readers interested in boxing, who will appreciate Kriegel's focus on the sport's history and the fighters who influenced it. —*Stephanie Howes*

Becoming Caitlin Clark: The Unknown Story of a Modern Basketball Superstar.

By Howard Megdal.

June 2025. 256p. illus. Triumph, \$28 (9781637277959). 796.323.

Given the cover photo and title, readers expecting a traditional memoir about basketball superstar Caitlin Clark might be a tad disappointed; nevertheless, this is a well-researched dive into Iowa girls basketball culture and the predecessors who fostered the conditions that enabled Clark's meteoric success as a high-schooler, through college, and in the WNBA. This complements Megdal's *Rare Gems* (2024), about four generations of women who paved the way for women's basketball, and examines the historic nature of the "Iowa way," as the state embraced the sport going back to the early 1900s and the tradition of girls playing a six-on-six format. Megdal chronicles Clark's career with interviews and plenty of hoop action but also delves into the significance of trailblazers like "Machine Gun" Molly Bolin Kazmer and Iowa coaches Lisa Bluder (who wrote the foreword), Jan Jensen, and the legendary C. Vivian Stringer. Sports history buffs and basketball fans will understand why former Iowa governor Herschel Loveless declared, "Girls basketball is as much a part of our state as our green valley of corn." —*Brenda Barrera*

★ **Death of a Racehorse: An American Story.**

By Katie Bo Lillis.

May 2025. 384p. Simon & Schuster, \$29.99 (9781668017012); e-book (9781668017036). 798.4.

Outside of the annual Kentucky Derby capturing the world's attention, the realm of horses and jockeys can fade into the sports-commentary background for all but aficionados. But in the past decade, a series of shocking deaths of prize mounts at numerous racetracks made headline news. One name kept coming up: Bob Baffert, arguably the most successful horse trainer in American history, with six Kentucky Derby and two Triple Crown winners. Baffert has been linked to controversy throughout his career, specifically to doping accusations. CNN investigative reporter Lillis uses Baffert's life to frame this investigation of current practices and alleged abuses within today's world of elite,

big-money, international thoroughbred racing. Lillis spent six years working horses at racetracks, and her fluid writing reflects thorough research, insider's knowledge, and an abiding awe for the beauty of these magnificent animals. Baffert's life offers a fitting vehicle. From his bareback racing days as a teen in Texas to his steady climb through the worlds of quarter horses, contenders, and multiple champions, Baffert's experiences reflect changing attitudes towards training, pedigrees, performances, and drug use. This informative and compelling read is sure to attract an audience far beyond the first-Saturday-in-May crowd. —*Kathleen McBroom*

Flow: Women's Counternarratives from Rivers, Rock, and Sky.

Ed. by Denisa Krásná and Alena Rainsberry.

May 2025. 336p. illus. Rocky Mountain, paper, \$40 (9781771607063). 796.082.

Thrill seekers are drawn to adventure sports, and it's well-known that a majority are men; *Flow* challenges that stereotype and presents a welcome testament to the fortitude of women who discovered their passion for these types of sports and who revel in the adrenaline rush that comes with achievements like successfully kayaking over a waterfall. The format is easy to follow, with a short description of each of the sports featured and divided into three sections: Rivers-Whitewater Kayaking, Rock-Climbing, and Sky-Highlining. For those unfamiliar, highlining is "a type of slackline setup at a considerable height, typically spanning across a gap like a canyon or between cliffs or trees," somewhat similar to tightrope walking. A total of 19 essays are written by women, and each contributor, whether teenager, retiree, straight, 2SLGBTQUIA+, or BIPOC shares their unique journey of self-discovery and empowerment. These women from various countries test their mettle, confront sexism, and lift the next generation of athletes through mentorship programs. Each essay celebrates women pushing boundaries and offers a road map for those inspired to follow. —*Brenda Barrera*

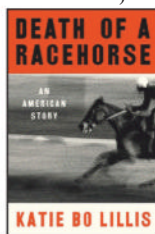
YA: Readers interested in extreme sports will draw inspiration from the experiences and contributors from a variety of backgrounds and countries. BB.

★ **It's Only Drowning: A True Story of Learning to Surf and the Pursuit of Common Ground.**

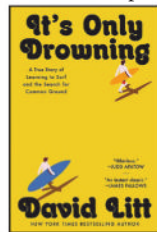
By David Litt.

June 2025. 304p. Gallery, \$29.99 (9781668035351); e-book (9781668035375). 797.3.

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, Litt, a journalist, former speechwriter for President Obama, and best-selling author (*Democracy in One Book or Less*, 2020), found himself in fear about the rise in fascism and suffering from depression. At the encouragement of his wife and as a way to help cope with his crisis, Litt took on a new challenge, surfing. In the spirit of "finding common ground" by meeting him on his turf, Litt turns to his brother-in-law Matt, an experi-



enced surfer and nonvoting Joe Rogan fan. With self-deprecating humor and a tenacious spirit, Litt exposes his own insecurities and shares lessons learned as he improves his fundamental skills from balancing on a foam board and reading waves to wiping out a lot. Together, he and Matt surf the familiar Jersey Shore waters and eventually branch out to California, Spain, France, and the mecca, Hawaii. Litt's chronicle offers beautiful writing and laugh-out-loud humor and will engage anyone who has dreamed about learning to surf or undertaking any other seemingly improbable challenge. Litt also navigates the ebb and flow of familial relationships, sharing his own experience as an example of how to agree to disagree without demonizing one another. Timely and uplifting. —Brenda Barrera



YA: Older YAs will relate to Litt's trying a new sport while navigating friendships with those who hold opposing viewpoints. BB.

Let Us Play: Winning the Battle for Gender Diverse Athletes.

By Harrison Browne and Rachel Browne.

May 2025. 240p. Beacon, \$27.95 (9780807045343); e-book (9780807045350). 796.334.

Investigative journalist Rachel Browne and Harrison Browne, the first transgender professional hockey player, are not only co-authors but also siblings who have teamed up to address the “moral panic” fueling attacks against gender diverse athletes and present a compelling defense. Whether it's Harrison's first-hand experiences in the aptly titled introduction, “She Shoots, He Scores,” or dispelling misconceptions with arguments for inclusion, this book succeeds in clearly exploring topics that range from the current political climate to hormones, the Olympics, locker-room etiquette, and NCAA rules and regulations by forgoing overly technical language. *Let Us Play* offers a compelling case of a human-rights issue while reminding readers that gender-diverse athletes, like cisgender athletes, just want to play freely and be part of a team. The authors offer an antidote to the political vitriol with a vision on moving forward without being a threat to women's sports. Part of the Queer Action/Queer Ideas Series, this features gender-diverse athletes from high school to the world-class level and includes a glossary, action items, and discussion topics. —Brenda Barrera

YA: YAs will appreciate this clarifying approach to a complex issue. BB.

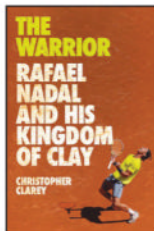
The Warrior: Rafael Nadal and His Kingdom of Clay.

By Christopher Clarey.

May 2025. 368p. illus. Grand Central, \$32.50 (9781538759134); e-book (9781538759158). 796.34.

Clarey, an award-winning journalist, has been covering professional tennis for more

than 30 years and is regarded as one of the leading voices in the sport. In a logical follow-up to *The Master* (2021), his best-selling biography of Roger Federer, Clarey turns his focus to another legendary player, Spaniard Rafael “Rafa” Nadal, who retired in 2024 after an illustrious career that includes 14 French Open (also known as Roland Garros) titles, 22 Grand Slams, and two Olympic gold medals. Readers will relish Clarey's exquisite writing and insightful interviews as he peels back Nadal's meteoric rise from a prodigy to a legendary champion, highlighting his unparalleled work ethic and revisiting his greatest matches. There's even a chapter devoted to his distinctive pre-match rituals. This book, however, proves more than a typical biography. With a clear nod to France, Clarey illuminates the fascinating history of Roland Garros from its namesake fighter pilot to the composition of the red-clay surface that makes for spellbinding, tactical matches. *The Warrior* tells the story of the astonishing career of Nadal, the “King of Clay,” with his huge heart and tenacity, whose legacy includes records likely to remain unchallenged for years. —Brenda Barrera



Literature

Breakfast Wine: A Memoir of Chasing an Unconventional Life and Finding a Way Home.

By Alex Poppe.

June 2025. 244p. Apprentice, \$30.99 (9781627205931); paper, \$20.99 (9781627205948); e-book (9781627205955). 810.

As a self-described risk-taker and adventurer, Poppe spent a decade in Kurdistan as an English-language instructor and occasional humanitarian aid worker, which, for her, checked all the boxes. From 2011 to 2021, the region was rocked by earthquakes both physical and political. The traumas of civil war continued, regimes were challenged, and beloved rulers died. She immersed herself in the struggle to help students stay focused, stay engaged, and just to stay. It was an exacting time to be a woman in a traditionally patriarchal culture, and Poppe, her students, and her colleagues assessed feminism through learned, shared, and explored experiences. Poppe embraces this immersive, multicultural, and unsettling life with a brio that often borders on the foolhardy and a compassion that extends to realms that are simultaneously demoralizing and illuminating. Fearless yet resilient, Poppe is the epitome of a person whose romanticism is tempered by a realism borne of too much experience. With machete sharpness and magical imagery, Poppe extols the allure and apprehension



of Kurdistan's people as she embraces their culture and attempts to prepare them and herself for an uncertain future. A joyous, sobering, and spirited memoir of place and the chance encounters that can shape a lifetime. —Carol Haggas

Clam Down: A Metamorphosis.

By Anelise Chen.

June 2025. 368p. One World, \$29 (9781984801845); e-book (9781984801852). 813.

Chen's memoir opens with the dissolution of her marriage and deftly combines autobiography, scientific and historical inquiry, and imaginative fiction. The destabilizing breakup sends her on a journey of self-exploration through travel and contemplation of the natural world. Chen presents research into the adaptation strategies of animals, individuals, and groups to suggest an evolutionary rationale for her paradoxical self-preservation behavior. She adopts the “Clam” persona as a detached, objective proxy for examining her conflicting instincts of escapism and an irrepressible desire for connection. Ongoing analyses of immigration assimilation challenges help to illuminate similar compensation patterns in her family. Chen's unconventional approach includes abrupt shifts to a first-person projection of her father and a fanciful “interview” with a clam as it responds to ongoing environmental hardship. This creative nonfiction format allows Chen to relate her experience to more universal issues. What results is a personal yet expansive discourse about physical and psychic freedom, the burden of choice, and the consequences of stagnation. Informative and moving, Chen's chimeric work will garner interest beyond the typical memoir's audience. —Joelle Egan

Cooler Than Cool: The Life and Work of Elmore Leonard.

By C. M. Kushins.

June 2025. 512p. Mariner, \$32 (9780063306868); e-book (9780063306882). 813.

He was supposed to be a car dealer. Except he hated cars—he liked to read, and was discovering that he might be a good writer. Maybe there was a career in that? Elmore Leonard (1925–2013) became one of the most respected and popular writers of crime fiction, particularly pulps and westerns. Known for his bare-bones writing style and pitch-perfect dialogue, he influenced generations of writers who came after him. In this new biography, Kushins (who's also written books about Warren Zevon and John Bonham) draws on previously published sources, new interviews, and unpublished material including letters, excerpts from an unfinished novel, and snippets from a memoir-in-progress. Kushins isn't the first to give Leonard the biographical treatment—see, for example, Paul Challen's *Get Dutch!* (2000)—but he may be the first to really get inside the author's mind, to show us not just who Elmore Leonard was but how he got that way. For Leonard's legion of fans, the book is a must-read, but you don't need to be

a Leonard fan to enjoy this beautifully crafted life story. —David Pitt

Dear Alyne: My Years as a Married Virgin.

By Alyne Tamir.

June 2025. 272p. HarperOne, \$26.99 (9780063250024); e-book (9780063250048). 810.

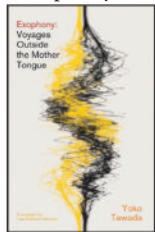
Social media celebrity Tamir (@dearlyne) chronicles her emancipation from a strict religious upbringing and dysfunctional personal relationships. Disconnected by the contradictory ideologies of her Mormon mother and Jewish father, Tamir was immobilized by decisions and ashamed of her natural desires. She adhered to the Mormon Church's directives for chastity, traditional roles for women, and an all-encompassing commitment to the church. A Panglossian portrayal of marriage and motherhood pressured Tamir to marry a man she hardly knew, and she found herself unprepared to consummate the union. Divorcing after years of feigning contentment, she discovered newfound independence through solo travel and interfaith relationships. She describes how she gradually escaped her ingrained conditioning, risking alienation but finally discovering the autonomy she inwardly craved. Part travelogue, part confessional, this candid, contemplative memoir offers a trove of information about the secretive religious practices Tamir left behind. Tamir has traveled much of the world, but she asserts that exploring her consciousness has proven to be the most challenging and illuminating adventure. Perfect for Tamir's followers and fans of Elizabeth Gilbert and Cheryl Strayed. —Joelle Egan

Exophony: Voyages Outside the Mother Tongue.

By Yoko Tawada. Tr. by Lisa Hofmann-Kuroda.

June 2025. 192p. New Directions, paper, \$17.95 (9780811237871). 895.64.

Originally published in Japan in 2003, National Book Award-winning Tawada's enigmatic essay collection—her first in English translation—arrives meticulously enabled by Hofmann-Kuroda, who impressively renders Tawada's inventive linguistic acrobatics. "Exophony" refers to "the general experience



of existing outside of one's mother tongue," a lived experience for Japanese-born, German-domiciled Tawada, who writes brilliantly in both languages. She presents her collection in two sections. Part I covers global wanderings—20 cities in 20 chapters—that become opportunities to "feel out the linguistic textures of each place." Part II considers diverse, overlapping layers and quirks in both Japanese and German. Tawada explores the (colonized) dominance of French in Senegalese literature. She considers "enforced exophony" in Seoul, "where Japan had forced the Korean people into an exophonic

condition against their will . . . forced to speak in a language not their own." She suggests dismissing English loan words for wholly Japanese replacements: しも浄め (nether cleaner) for toiretto pēpā (toilet paper). She slyly, repeatedly rejects centering English: "It would be extremely boring if the world were to be completely overtaken by English." For audiences familiar with Tawada's recent novels—*Scattered All Over the Earth* (2022), *Paul Celan and the Trans-Tibetan Angel* (2024), *Suggested in the Stars* (2024)—*Exophony* is an ideal complement, illuminating, exploring, and experiencing "the space between languages . . . the poetic ravine between them." —Terry Hong

Homework.

By Geoff Dyer.

June 2025. 288p. Farrar, \$29 (9780374616229); e-book (9780374616236). 820.

Dyer's *The Last Days of Roger Federer*, (2022) memoir is a wonderfully wry account of his postwar British childhood in Cheltenham, a town on the edge of the Cotswolds. He details fleeting fascinations with toys, collectible cards, prog rock, and different bikes as well as constants, such as his father's relentless attempts to save money, a diet largely made up of sugar, and a compelling desire to play soccer at all times. Dyer suggests Britain was not a plentiful or rich country in the 1960s and '70s, but it was a stable place, culturally rich, and full of opportunities for those who passed the brutal 11-plus exam that decided the paths of so many so early. From his early years to grammar school and the cusp of university, Dyer considers family and friends whose lives he can only sometimes clearly recall; delightfully, Dyer often notes that he will not check vague memories and that he has omitted facts he does not want to share. Insightful, conversational, and often very funny, Dyer's memoir is a glorious consideration of class, family, and the vagaries of childhood. —Alexander Moran

I'll Tell You When I'm Home.

By Hala Alyan.

June 2025. 272p. Simon & Schuster/Avid Reader, \$28.99 (9781982182588); e-book (9781982182601). 810.

In the early weeks of motherhood, poet and novelist Alyan (*The Moon That Turns You Back*, 2024) feels compelled to explain that her daughter was born via surrogacy. She couldn't carry the pregnancy. Her daughter is biologically hers. In this vibrant, poetic memoir, Alyan unpacks her difficult journey to motherhood and many facets of her past. As a Palestinian American, Alyan grew up between the U.S. and the Arab world. She promised her grandmother she would return to Beirut but instead married a white man and stayed in the States. After years of operations and miscarriages, Alyan contacted a surrogacy agency during the pandemic. When her husband leaves, going off to Mexico as the pregnancy progresses, Alyan confronts her wishes for the future along with the ghosts of her past.

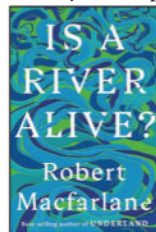
The in-betweenness of Alyan's existence and the particular challenges and legacies of her diaspora identity combine with a writer's continual remaking of herself. A poignant exploration of suffering and wonder and a portrait of a woman on the cusp of bringing a new life to her world. —Bridget Thoreson

Is a River Alive?

By Robert Macfarlane.

May 2025. 384p. illus. Norton, \$31.99 (9780393242133); e-book (9780393242164). 820.

Rivers the world over were long revered as sacred beings, until industrialization reduced these lifelines to mere commodities as they were poisoned by toxic chemicals,



dammed, and entombed beneath cities. The Rights of Nature movement seeks to restore our grasp of how essential rivers (as well as forests, mountains, and other natural entities) are to life on earth by reimagining them as alive and therefore

possessing innate rights to live freely and healthily. To fully comprehend the profound implications of this restorative vision, British nature writer extraordinaire Macfarlane (*Underland*, 2019) traveled to an Ecuadorian cloud forest, the endangered waterways in Chennai, India, and a mighty river in Canada. In between chronicles of these revelatory, at times perilous expeditions, he visits his hometown touchpoint, a rare spring-fed chalk stream. Macfarlane combines natural and human history while recounting his adventures and profiling his guides in each region, exceptionally knowledgeable and courageous scientists and river defenders. The arguments for nature's rights, the drama of his encounters, the crimes against rivers and all that they nurture, and the valor, genius, and uncanny gifts of eco-activists are all conveyed in gorgeously vibrant, fresh, and gripping language. The result is a ravishing and enlightening inquiry shaped by hydropoetics and a deeply considered commitment to rejuvenating, cherishing, and protecting rivers and all of nature. —Donna Seaman

Lessons from My Teachers: From Preschool to the Present.

By Sarah Ruhl.

May 2025. 240p. Marysue Rucci, \$28.99 (9781668034965); e-book (9781668034989). 814.

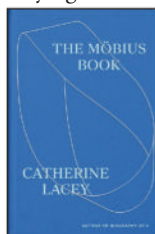
Acclaimed playwright, poet, and Yale professor Ruhl (*Love Poems in Quarantine*, 2022) draws from a life full of lessons to create this moving memoir in essays. It is, as she puts it, "a portrait of my life told through portraits of my teachers." Her teachers come in many forms, from her piano teacher to Rainer Maria Rilke to her dog Minerva. From her sister she learns, "when cutting a little sister's hair, don't use Scotch tape." Mentor and playwright Paula Vogel teaches Ruhl to "make yourself visible." And from her grandfather, a pediatrician: "see one, do one, teach one," or

that a key part of learning is passing on lessons to the next generation. Ruhl is generous in her praise for these teachers and in the lessons she shares with readers. Funny and sad, tender and profound, this collection celebrates the bonds between teachers of all kinds and their students. Best savored slowly, this is a touching collection that readers will appreciate. —*Rebecca Hopman*

★ **The Möbius Book.**
By Catherine Lacey.

June 2025, 240p. Farrar, \$27 (9780374615406); e-book (9780374615413). 810.

Is it a memoir or a novel or a little of both? Better to categorize Lacey's (*Biography of X*, 2023) latest as its own genre, a category-defying, creative, thought-provoking piece of



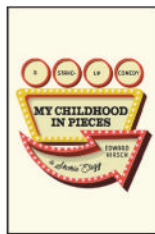
literature on loss, betrayal, friendships, faith, and more. Her narrative structure is unconventional, too, as the book can be read front-to-back or back-to-front, with no chapters, just one intertwining story with paragraph breaks, told in Lacey's singular, staccato prose. Two sections of roughly the same length are told from differing perspectives, corresponding to the book's title. The first section begins like a mystery, with what seems like blood, blood, and more blood, before turning into something else, something more. Marie is good at friendships ("easy in it") but not so much with romantic love; she wanted too much from it, she admits, "held it to impossible standards, wanted it to totally redeem her." *The Möbius Book* is full of questions that cannot be fully answered. What is real? What is fake? What is love? Why does suffering exist? Unlike life, there is no beginning or end, just a story that follows its own strange, wild, and mesmerizing pattern. A sui generis work, like no other. —*June Sawyers*

★ **My Childhood in Pieces: A Stand-Up Comedy, a Skokie Elegy.**

By Edward Hirsch.

June 2025, 288p. Knopf, \$29 (9780593802823). 811.

Renowned poet Hirsch recounts his rough-and-tumble Chicago and Skokie childhood in ingeniously distilled comedic bits. Some are as concise as a sentence; others set a scene



and include dialogue, usually in the form of insults or threats. Pithy, lacerating, bittersweet, and hilarious, these quick takes often focus on Irma, Hirsch's determined mother, and his gambler birth father, called Ruby, who left the family when Hirsch and his sister Lenie were very young. Irma eventually remarried, and Kurt became their steadfast father, while their obstreperous family circle included a bunch of Irma's friends she insisted they embrace as aunts and uncles: "The women were loud, the men shady." "No one had a job—everyone

had a hustle." Hirsch sets his extended family's combative temperaments, sharp-witted battles, and scrappy struggles within the history of 1950s and '60s Jewish life in Chicago and its suburb Skokie. Here too is the future poet's coming-of-age as a multitalented high-school athlete, which secured his crucial college scholarship, while he was also drawn to literature: "Reading poetry, I felt poetry reading me." Wisecracks, mischief, trouble, arguments, cruelties, absurdities, and deceit are all delivered with a stand-up comic's precision and a poet's gift for exhilarating and droll wordplay. This card-slapping, dice-rolling, nimbly riffing, heart-wrenching remembrance is glorious in its pain and love, humor and wonder. —*Donna Seaman*

The Place of Tides.

By James Rebanks.

June 2025, 304p. Mariner, \$28.99 (9780063434172). 810.

"She stood there, totally alone in this vast estate of rock, ocean, and sky," recalls author Rebanks. "Her name was Anna." Following their brief encounter on the Norwegian coast, Rebanks returned to his life in the modern world but found himself unable to escape her image. Seven years later, he reached out to Anna and soon found himself spending spring on Fjørøysvør, the Place of Tides, helping Anna and her friend Ingrid carry on a centuries-old tradition for Viking women: preparing for the return of the wild eider ducks. "We spent hours gazing out to the wild, grey sea," he remembers, as they gathered materials and built nests. Their calming daily routines were "simple and repetitive," but they did not come without risks. Rebanks recounts family stories shared by Anna and Ingrid of the dangers that come with their labor of love, punctuated with simple, poetic language that captures the beauty and magic of this place. Perfect for those wanting to share in the memory of this ancient tradition. —*Melanie Dragger*

The River's Daughter.

By Bridget Crocker.

June 2025, 304p. Spiegel & Grau, \$29 (9781954118546); e-book (9781954118867). 810.

Whitewater rafting guide Crocker shares her stark personal story in this memoir of abuse and resilience. After her mother destroyed their family by abandoning her parenting responsibilities, Crocker fled to her father, only to suffer violent physical abuse with the tacit approval of her stepmother. Returning to her mother in desperation, she found her in the grips of a fringe environmentalist group, and Crocker was soon sexually assaulted by a friend of her stepfather's. Another sexual assault followed while on a canoeing trip, neither attack garnering parental sympathy. Desperate to flee all family ties, she joined her boyfriend on a rafting trip and committed to a new freedom on the water. The horrific family drama consumes the first third of the book, which may dissuade readers seeking reflections on Crocker's rafting adventures. Those who persevere

will find many details, especially about the Snake and Kern rivers, and also of her travels in Africa (where she describes assisting an abuse victim). Not for the faint of heart; recommend for readers seeking domestic-violence survivor stories. —*Colleen Mondor*

Toni at Random: The Iconic Writer's Legendary Editorship.

By Dana A. Williams.

June 2025, 368p. Amistad, \$29.99 (9780063011977); e-book (9780063012004). 813.

Williams chronicles the venerable novelist Toni Morrison's deeply influential run as a book editor at Random House, offering a fresh look at her career and life. As she writes: "Everything about Toni Morrison's distinguished editorship pointed to her understanding of that one truth—that any attempt to revolutionize the publishing industry to be more inclusive of Black authors and Black stories would require an army of people united by a belief in literary and artistic excellence in Black culture." This absorbing portrait of Morrison as an editor of fiction, poetry, essays, and many other genres who worked to enhance and expand that artistic excellence is vividly drawn with firsthand accounts and insights into the extraordinary care and insight she brought to her relationships with the cultural icons and intellectual heavyweights of the day. While there is no shortage of biographical works about Morrison the author, Williams offers a distinct, in-depth, and essential focus on Morrison's legacy as an editor, combining a scholarly approach based on detailed research with an accessibility that will appeal to a wide range of readers. —*Allison Escoto*

The Wanderer's Curse.

By Jennifer Hope Choi.

May 2025, 304p. Norton, \$29.99 (9781324035510); e-book (9781324035527). 810.

Choi, senior editor of *Bon Appétit*, debuts with a searching memoir that explores her relationships with her mother, her art, and her identity. In 2007, after divorcing Choi's father, her mother moves to small-town Alaska. She doesn't stay long, moving multiple times over the next several years. In the meantime, Choi is living in New York, struggling as a writer but making a decent living as a bartender—until she isn't. Choi finds herself moving to South Carolina to live with her mom, a difficult proposal considering her mother's brusque and dismissive demeanor. However, as she learns more about her mother, including her mother's relationship with her own parents, Choi sees more of herself and realizes they both may have *yeokmasal*, the wanderer's curse. Choi juxtaposes her personal details and cultural histories like that of the jindo (a Korean dog breed), Korean churches and exorcisms, and Korean pop culture. While the tangents are fascinating, the two threads don't always come together seamlessly. Flashes of impeccable writing make Choi a writer to watch. —*Kathy Sexton*

Went to London, Took the Dog: The Diary of a 60-Year-Old Runaway.

By Nina Stibbe.

May 2025. 352p. Picador, paper, \$18.99 (9781035025312); e-book (9781035025282). 810.

Already a hit in the UK, Stibbe's diary of a recent year will remind readers of her beloved epistolary memoir, *Love, Nina* (2014). Even though 40 years separate the material of the two books, and some heaviness lurks in the impetus for this pivotal "sabbatical" year, everything readers love about Stibbe's writing is delightfully, companionably, hilariously here (as are some familiar faces). Opening with a useful cast of characters list, the diary begins in March 2022, as Cornwall-dwelling Stibbe seeks a solo apartment in London. Divorce isn't mentioned until about halfway through the book and is never dwelled on, but readers understand what's up, as Stibbe, only occasionally wobbly, writes about the newness of this life, sharing meals with her two young adult children, taking faithful dog Peggy everywhere, and bonding over plumbing issues with her playwright landlord. She also catalogs literary and global news and the gynecological concerns of her inner circle (an unintended wee here, a vaginal prolapse there). With gorgeously joyful moments and profound realizations, this is laugh-and-cry-out-loud material from an unparalleled observer and stylist. —Annie Bostrom

Wildfire Days: A Woman, a Hotshot Crew, and the Burning American West.

By Kelly Ramsey.

June 2025. 352p. Scribner, \$29.99 (9781668031476); e-book (9781668031490). 810.

Ramsey is a woman seeking herself in all the wrong places. When her memoir begins, she is a rookie on a wildfire-fighting crew in far Northern California. She has, for disparate reasons, chosen to join the roughest and most demanding of crews to begin her career. She was not born to this, though. With bachelor's and master's degrees in humanities and writing, she might be expected to pursue a creative or academic path, but her alcoholic father and unsettled life have left her uncertain of her own value and direction. She is determined to reckon with her self-destructive past and to be part of this male-dominated crew or die trying. Her significant other, also a firefighter but on another crew on a different schedule, turns out to have a much different view of who she is. This is not a glamorous existence: underpaid and underfed, these crews work in dangerous conditions for the love of the work and the land. Readable and compelling, Ramsey's memoir will appeal to fans of Cheryl Strayed. —Danise Hoover

Poetry

The Lost Songs of Nina Simone.

By Shonda Buchanan.

May 2025. 119p. Running Wild/RIZE, paper, \$21.99 (9781960018984); e-book (9781960018977). 811.

The life of legendary singer, composer, and

civil-rights activist Nina Simone is creatively distilled in this new collection by poet, memoirist, and educator Buchanan, author of *Black Indian* (2019). As she writes in her introduction, these poems are both "a case of inquiry . . . and a gesture of adoration." Arranged in chronological sections, the book opens with poetic interpretations of Simone's origin and ancestry, vividly exploring the natural world of her birthplace—"This wet amber of red oak trees, / county grapes and swamp rushes, / boiling sweet Carolina heat"—and giving voice to a selection of Simone's ancestors and family members. This sets the foundation and tone for the rest of Buchanan's rhythmic, immersive bio-poems. Simone is a fully realized presence throughout this volume, as Buchanan follows her coming-of-age as a child prodigy, her battles with mental illness and addiction, and, finally, fulfilling her destiny in becoming a world-renowned singer and advocate for civil rights. An inventive interpretation of a remarkable life. —Allison Escoto

History

Apocalypse: How Catastrophe Transformed Our World and Can Forge New Futures.

By Lizzie Wade.

May 2025. 320p. Harper, \$32 (9780063097308). 907.2.

In her analysis of existential threats and cataclysms, journalist Wade discovers resiliency, transformation, and, ultimately, the chance at survival in a post-apocalyptic world. Drawing on history, archaeology, and even some of her imagination, she finds possibilities and surprises arising from major destructive events. Wade defines an apocalypse as "a rapid, collective loss that fundamentally changes a society's way of life and sense of identity." Her examples include a period of massive flooding about 7,000 years ago when sea levels rose hundreds of feet worldwide, a severe and prolonged drought occurring 4,000 years ago, the Black Death (bubonic plague) of the mid-1300s (estimated to have killed up to sixty percent of Europe's population), and European colonialism, which ravaged Indigenous people and their cultures starting 500 years ago. Currently, climate change is tragically on course to wreak havoc on the planet. Wade wisely notes, "Apocalypses have always revealed and exploited societies' weak points." Look no further than COVID-19 for proof of that. A pensive study of past calamities, the chaos that ensues, and emerging opportunities for hopeful new beginnings. —Tony Miksaneck



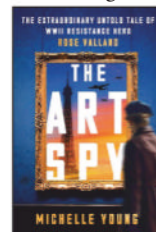
The Art Spy: The Extraordinary Untold Tale of WWII Resistance Hero Rose Valland.

By Michelle Young.

May 2025. 400p. illus. HarperOne, \$29.99 (9780063295896); e-book (9780063295919). 940.5481.

It would have been easy to underestimate art historian Rose Valland. While overseeing the Jeu de Paume museum in Paris, she was

modestly attired, calm, cool, and collected, decorous camouflage she used to powerful effect as she faced down art-looting Nazis. Valland was already battle-tested, having risen from humble beginnings to excel academically, only to be stymied by entrenched misogyny while keeping secret her intimate relationship with Joyce Heer, a multilingual Brit working for the U.S. Embassy. Young recounts Valland's brilliance, courage, and sangfroid in enthralling detail as she chronicles her daring



work to save the museum's treasures and her shrewd spying for the Resistance. By pairing Valland's risky efforts with the besieged lives of the Jewish gallery owner Paul Rosenberg and his family, Young captures the full brunt of the Nazis' art crimes. Valland was initially celebrated for her unshakable commitment to preserving her country's culture, her epic sacrifices, and her ongoing valor when she became a highly decorated, postwar army officer and tracked down stolen art in Germany. But when she published the first of two planned memoirs, those intent on concealing France's collusion with the Nazis made sure she was silenced and forgotten. But now, like Valland's zealous rescue of stolen masterpieces, Young vibrantly restores a hidden treasure to the pantheon of WWII heroes. —Donna Seaman

Belle Starr: The Truth behind the Wild West Legend.

By Michael Wallis.

June 2025. 544p. Norton/Liveright, \$32.99 (9781631494772). 978.

Belle Starr developed a reputation as a scandalous outlaw in the Wild West. Wallis (*The Best Land under Heaven*, 2017) argues that much of Starr's reputation was unearned and debunks myths about her life. Starr grew up as a spirited child in Missouri and was a teenager during the Civil War, in which Missourians engaged in bloody guerrilla warfare. After the war ended, her family home became a haven for infamous Wild West bandits, which continued throughout her life. Wallis also relates life events and crimes of the significant men in Starr's life, including her many husbands, and how relations with them further tarnished her reputation. Although Starr aided and abetted unsavory characters, Wallis makes the case that she was likely innocent of many—but not all—of the crimes of which she was accused. Finally, Wallis evaluates the likely suspects in Starr's murder and reveals the fate of her remaining relatives and her homestead. A measured but fascinating account of a mythical outlaw. —Rebekah Kati

Charles Sumner: Conscience of a Nation.

By Zaakir Tameez.

June 2025. 640p. Holt, \$38.99 (9781250362551); e-book (9781250362568). 973.7.

Legal scholar Tameez's first book is a highly

readable biography of lawyer, abolitionist, and Massachusetts U.S. Senator Charles Sumner. Though this overlaps with Stephen Puleo's *The Great Abolitionist* (2024), Tameez offers new information and insights about the lawmaker who was infamously and viciously assaulted by a representative on the Senate floor, while his accessible legal analysis underlines how modern debates about federal authority are still shaped by nineteenth-century disputes. He reveals that Sumner's respect for African Americans and his lifelong battle for equality were rooted in his childhood in an African American neighborhood in Boston. Tameez explores Sumner's possible homosexuality, and while he respects and appreciates Sumner, he does detail his shortcomings, especially his lack of empathy for women's suffrage and Native Americans and his inability to compromise with officeholders who also believed in equality but not as passionately as he did, such as President Grant and Wisconsin Senator Matthew Carpenter. Throughout the book, Tameez vividly and concisely sets the stage for the events in Sumner's life by providing vivid details about the setting, social customs and issues, and even the weather. —*John Rowen*

Charlottesville: An American Story.
By Deborah Baker.

June 2025. 432p. Graywolf, \$35 (9781644453414); e-book (9781644453421). 975-5.

This stark account of the 2017 white supremacist "Unite the Right" rally seeks perspective but cannot shake deep feelings of dread. Baker (*The Last Englishmen*, 2018), who began her writing career as a literary biographer, animates her retelling of the infamous torch march and the violence that followed with the personal trajectories of key people involved. Having grown up in greater Charlottesville, Baker is especially interested in the "lonely prophets" who "had known something awful was going to happen" in her genteel, supposedly peaceful hometown. Profiling city officials, activists, and clergy, she is determined not to make this a book about alt-right agitators or racist thugs. But bigger questions can't be kept at bay. Why Charlottesville? Did the conflagration really begin as a dispute over Civil War monuments? Why did the region feature in the "fever dreams" of poet Ezra Pound and his circle of fascist sympathizers? Considering Charlottesville, are we looking into a mirror? An abyss? Answers are elusive, but Baker expertly limns prevailing anxieties. As she quotes one witness, "America is Charlottesville now." —*Brendan Driscoll*

Kuleana: A Story of Family, Land, and Legacy in Old Hawai'i.
By Sara Kehaulani Goo.

June 2025. 368p. illus. Flatiron, \$29.99 (9781250333445); e-book (9781250333438). 996-9.

To drive the Road to Hana on Maui is to take a verdant and vertiginous voyage through the way the island used to look before the resorts, condos, T-shirt shacks, and tourist

ocean liners took over the shoreline. Drivers who snake around 600-plus hairpin curves and play chicken crossing numerous one-lane bridges will traverse land that has been in Goo's family for generations, bestowed upon her ancestors by King Kamehameha III. Now faced with a staggering tax bill, the far-flung, multigenerational Kahanu descendants face losing the property unless they can agree that the *kuleana*, or responsibility, is something they all want to shoulder. An award-winning journalist and editor at multiple news outlets, Goo shares the story of a threatened land and fading way of life. Beyond having to navigate the morass of bureaucratic red tape required to satisfy an inconsistent tax code, Goo is forced to confront the pervasive erosion of Native Hawaiian culture and contemplate what it means to be a steward for future generations. Passionate about her family heritage, Goo has written a historically and culturally significant memoir. —*Carol Haggas*

Leatherneck Warrior: General Lemuel C. Shepherd Jr.

By Richard D. Camp.

June 2025. 224p. illus. Casemate, \$34.95 (9781636245065). 940-545.

Retired Marine Colonel Camp presents an excellent biography of the twentieth commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps, who, in his nearly 40-year career as a leatherneck, saw action in many campaigns. Camp briefly looks at Lemuel C. Shepherd's early life and training at Virginia Military Institute before Shepherd's distinguished service in WWI. Shepherd spent the interwar period as aide-de-camp to the marine commandant, serving in Haiti and China, and building amphibious warfare doctrine. He led marines in some of the toughest battles in the Pacific theater of WWII and after the war fought another kind of battle against the government to maintain the USMC's independence and capabilities. Victory there was monumentally important when a scant five years brought another war, this time in Korea. Shepherd left command in Korea to become commandant and led the corps with professionalism for four years before retiring. Camp has a "just the facts" style that keeps the action moving. *Leatherneck Warrior* is a concise look at a marine whose life touched many important points in modern American military history. —*James Pekoll*

Motherland: 500,000 Years of African History, Cultures, and Identity.

By Luke Pepera.

June 2025. 432p. illus. Pegasus, \$35 (9781639368839); e-book (9781639368846). 960.

Africa is often read and understood through the twin lenses of colonization and the transatlantic slave trade. While these painful stories are crucial for understanding Africa's history, as well as the world's, *Motherland* reminds readers that these account for only a few hundred years out of the millennia-long history of the African continent.

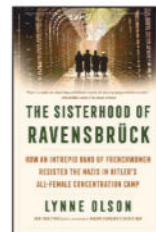
In this engaging book, Ghanaian historian and anthropologist Pepera highlights a few of the incalculably many histories and cultures that have risen, fallen, and survived throughout Africa. Organized into chapters that highlight themes such as ancestor worship, trickster folklore, and matriarchy, the book spans a wide chronological and geographic range, traveling from medieval Mali to twentieth-century Brooklyn to Pepera's own grandfather's funeral in Ghana. Perhaps inevitably, the book's scope sometimes leads to generalization and oversimplification of the huge array of cultures, nations, and ethnic groups considered here. But Pepera's accessible recounting of history and straightforward writing style offer space for readers new to African history to find avenues for further exploration. A sprawling, eclectic, sometimes messy celebration of Africa's vast and varied history. —*Jenny Hamilton*

 The Sisterhood of Ravensbrück: How an Intrepid Band of Frenchwomen Resisted the Nazis in Hitler's All-Female Concentration Camp.

By Lynne Olson.

June 2025. 384p. illus. Random, \$35 (9780593732304); e-book (9780593732311). 940-53.

Historian Olson (*Empress of the Nile*, 2023) takes a piercing look at the Ravensbrück concentration camp through the experiences of four female French Resistance fighters imprisoned there: anthropologist Germaine Tillion, young widow Jacqueline d'Alincourt, fiery Anise Girard, and passionate Geneviève de Gaulle (niece of Charles de Gaulle). Upon being deported to the



remote German camp, they faced brutal beatings at the hands of sadistic Nazis, inhumane work conditions, and filthy and overcrowded barracks where disease and infection ran rampant. Even more horrifying, they met a coterie of Polish prisoners, known as the "rabbits," who were being subjected to gruesome experiments. The bonds the women formed not only allowed them to survive these atrocities (giving them chances to bolster and even save each other time and again) but also to endure in the decades that followed. The women banded together to fight for justice against their Nazi tormentors, support other survivors, and help the Polish women still suffering from the brutal experiments they were subjected to receive treatments and settlements when the West German government very much wanted to ignore them, and the Allies were eager to move on. Olson's crisp, visceral prose makes this moving, heart-wrenching, and powerful testament to the power of chosen sisterhood and found family a true standout. —*Kristine Huntley*

YA/C: *Teens studying WWII and the Holocaust will find this an accessible and engaging read about the strength and ingenuity of true heroines. KH.*

Spotlight on Reference

Art from *Historical Dictionary of Chinese Cinema*.

e-Reference

The American Civil War: The International Context.

Jan. 2025. Gale [gale.com/c/american-civil-war-the-international-context].

This specialized database taps the collections of one American and six European libraries to offer contemporary archival documents relating to the American Civil War. These nineteenth-century artifacts include all kinds of observations on both the ongoing military action and life in general on both sides of the Atlantic. English is the predominant language, but some samples appear in their original German, French, Dutch, or Danish (and many include translations). The user-friendly interface features the standard Gale intuitive searching, navigational, and retrieval options, including multiple advanced searching filters plus streamlined searching by special collection, document type, language, or source library. Items can be accessed in various formats, including original handwriting or transcribed accounts, and represent varying degrees of conservation. Accompanying commentary indicates publisher, intended audience, author biographical information, significance of publication date, and other such information. The site comes with a Content Advisory due to the use (and indexing) of archaic terms and regional vernacular. In addition to nuanced historical and social tidbits, this unique resource also offers glimpses into mid-1800s fact-spinning. This primary-resource treasure trove will appeal to special, academic, and large public libraries. —*Kathleen McBroom*

Art, Race and Gender Collection.

Oct. 2024. Bloomsbury [bloomsburyvisualarts.com/about-art-race-and-gender].

A recent addition to the Bloomsbury Visual Arts digital hub, the Art, Race, and Gender Collection centers women and BIPOC artists and explores topics such as gender, race, sexuality, and ethnicity. Users can search the collection by keyword, browse more than 75 titles via a digital bookshelf, or browse by topic across the collection. The latter option allows for intriguing juxtapositions; chapters grouped under the heading “The Body” examine such disparate topics as the depiction of the aging female body in Alice Neel’s *Self-Portrait*, painted when the artist was 80 years old; heterosexuality, masculinity, and whiteness in works from the early twentieth-century Ashcan School movement; and the “superbody” in the *Marvel Swimsuit Special* of the 1990s. Search results

can be further refined by art form, school/movement, theme, ideology, and object, as well as content type, people, time period, and place. Within each chapter, hyperlinked subject terms facilitate further exploration. With a mix of background information, classic scholarship, and new research, this collection will be a useful addition to the digital offerings of academic libraries supporting art history, art and design, and visual culture programs. —*Lindsay Harmon*

Medieval Literature Aloud: Chaucer Studio Audio Collection.

Feb. 2025. Bloomsbury [bloomsburymedievalstudies.com/medieval-literature-aloud].

Bloomsbury’s *Medieval Literature Aloud* provides a rich resource for students and scholars of works from Chaucer to Malory to Dante. The bulk of this collection includes selections from works in Middle English, Old English, Old French, Middle High German, Old High German, Italian, and Old Norse. Pulled from various recordings from the 1990s to the present, the overall quality of the recordings and readings is excellent. There are a few recordings, mostly from the older selections, that have some distracting background noises or other issues with the audio quality. However, the performances themselves are still exceedingly well done. Being able to listen and follow along with a transcript is a notably helpful feature, especially for students, which makes it somewhat frustrating in the rare occasions when that option doesn’t appear, especially for parts of the greater works such as *The Canterbury Tales*. There is a small selection of secondary sources included that are particularly useful for this collection, including “A Student Guide to Chaucer’s Middle English.” Overall, this database is an excellent resource, collecting numerous classic texts and making them accessible to all. —*Lizzie Matkowski*

Print Reference

Bodypedia.

By Adam Taor.

June 2025. 216p. illus. Princeton, \$17.95 (9780691256788); e-book (9780691256795). 612.

In this eclectic work, Taor provides offbeat and intriguing stories showing connections between seemingly unrelated body parts and a “kaleidoscope of curios.” The “curios” are hard to describe concisely but can include strange or shocking events, people, aspects of famous plays or art, etc. Over 100 entries are included, arranged alphabetically. What’s unique is the

author’s approach to storytelling. His topics often include a play on words and often a circuitous path to the main focus of the entry. For example, how does the question, If an elderly aunt asked you to dust her cake, what would you do? relate to the anatomical structure, the innominate bones (or hip bones)? Without giving away the answer, just trust that the author makes the point fairly quickly. Most entries are a page or two in length and frequently include detailed, black-and-white line drawings of the anatomical parts in question. While some readers may leave disappointed by the loose connections between stories and anatomy, others will find the author’s approach fascinating. —*Kevin McDonough*

Capital Punishment: An Encyclopedia of History, Politics, Culture, and Law.

Ed. by Joseph A. Melusky.

2024. 400p. Bloomsbury Academic, \$100 (9781440877070); e-book (978216170600). 364.66.

This book synthesizes different perspectives on capital punishment in terms of law, culture, and the politics of bringing about change in the legal system to align with contemporary sentiment. The work starts with both an alphabetized and a topical list of entries, then an essay outlining the history and politics of capital punishment, primarily in the U.S. The appendixes contain nine primary documents (three directly pertain to the U.S.) and a chronology from ancient times to early 2024. The entries cover not only relevant laws (the Bail Reform Act of 1984), debates (“Gender and Capital Punishment”), personalities (Ted Bundy, Supreme Court justices), and organizations (ACLU) but also literature and films (*To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Just Mercy*). Each entry is succinct, cross-referenced, and has a list of references. Coverage of capital punishment in the U.S. is comprehensive; coverage of capital punishment in other countries and from premodern times is less complete. Some portions may be disturbing for certain readers. Overall, a good introductory reference on American attitudes towards capital punishment from the seventeenth century onwards. —*Muhammed Hassanali*

Careers in Healthcare. 2nd ed.

By Salem Press.

2024. 350p. illus. Salem, \$125 (9798891790544); e-book (9798891790551). 610.69.

The second edition of *Careers in Healthcare* makes a timely appearance with its emphasis on jobs that may not require a college degree. The 39 career profiles include the familiar (physician, physical therapist) and those not always considered (genetic counselor, audiologist). Each profile provides a snapshot with median pay, job outlook, education and other requirements, working conditions, and areas of interest. The overview includes duties, work environment, and schedules. Information about opportunities for specialization, career advancement, and related careers is also available. There are conversations with practitioners and descriptions of a typical workday as well. Three appendixes offer the Holland Codes used to match careers and

personality types, a general bibliography, and a list of organizations and resources for further career exploration. Purchase of the print book includes free online access. *Careers in Healthcare* is a useful resource for high-school, community-college, and public libraries. The information duplicates data in the Bureau of Labor Statistics' *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, available online, but having a print copy is an excellent option. —*Barbara Bibel*

YA/C: *High-school libraries will benefit from print and online access to this updated career resource. BB.*

Dolores Huerta: A Life in American History.

By April Tellez.

2025. 216p. illus. ABC-CLIO, \$68 (9781440872969); e-book (9798765116951). 331.47.

The latest volume in ABC-CLIO's Women Making History series fills a significant gap in the history of American labor and activism. According to Tellez, there are more than 10 times the number of books written about César Chávez than there are about Dolores Huerta, despite the fact that they cofounded United Farm Workers (UFW) and its predecessor, the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA). Still active in her nineties, Huerta's contributions to the American labor movement and her advocacy for marginalized and disadvantaged people, especially farmworkers, deserve to be fully recognized, and in this well-written, carefully researched, and comprehensive biography, Tellez does just that. She introduces us to the whole person, not just the public figure, because, as she writes, "[f]or Dolores, the political was personal, and the personal was political." After a time line and an essay on "Why Dolores Huerta Matters," chapters put her early life and activism in context and discuss her continued work. A solid selection for collections supporting studies in American labor history, women's history, and social justice. —*Carolyn Mulac*

The Forager's Almanac: A Year of Sustainable Gathering, Growing, Recipes and Wildcraft.

By Danielle Gallacher.

2025. 208p. illus. Mobius, \$22 (9781529437126); e-book (9781529437133). 581.63.

This book provides a monthly guide to key plants and mushrooms used for food and herbal medicine. Gallacher begins with foraging basics and guidance on how to become educated and advises starting with familiar species and joining groups and workshops. She outlines essential tools, including items like a trowel, magnifying glass, notebook, basket, knife, and field guide. A section on toxic look-alikes helps foragers distinguish between safe and dangerous species. The monthly listings vary by season, with more species covered in summer and early fall. Each plant or mushroom gets about a page, detailing harvest time, habitat, folklore, and uses, sometimes including recipes for food or herbal remedies. While a great resource for beginners, the book is based on northern England's climate (zone 7), similar

Top 10 Reference

These top 10 reference books were reviewed in *Booklist* between May 15, 2024, and April 1, 2025, and represent useful resources for libraries of all sizes, covering conspiracy theories, the Constitution, world cinema, the birds and the bees, and two excellent works on astronomy. —*Susan Maguire*

Conspiracy Theories: A Reference Handbook. By Jeffrey B. Webb. 2024. Bloomsbury Academic, \$75 (9781440877704).

This handbook, suitable for academics, college students, and other serious readers, takes a reasoned look at why conspiracy theories are so powerfully virulent, why they persist, and how they infect America's political and social landscape.

Field Guide to the Birds of North America. By Miles McMullan and others. 2025. Pelagic, \$29.99 (9781784275426).

A convenient, highly visual guide with identification notes placed side-by-side with high-impact illustrations, this will suit intrepid adventurers and armchair-birders alike.

Historical Dictionary of Chinese Cinema. 2nd ed. By Dan Luo and others. 2024. Rowman & Littlefield, \$185 (9781538157299).

Over 200 entries make up this welcome resource that uncovers China's rich cinematic history, including up-to-date changes in context, genre, and independent and commercial filmmaking outside of the state studio system.

A History of the Railroad in 100 Maps. By Jeremy Black. 2024. Univ. of Chicago, \$40 (9780226837888).

The 100 maps in this meticulously curated assemblage provide primary-source insights into the influence of railroads on economic, geopolitical, military, and social developments, both local and continental.

Jane Austen in 41 Objects. By Kathryn Sutherland. 2025. Bodleian Library, \$40 (9781851246267).

Each carefully selected object—from her pelisse to a wallpaper fragment to a theater bill—and accompanying commentary illuminate some aspect of Jane Austen's experiences or is an item that appeared in her writing.

Modern Nigeria. By Alex Egodotaye Asakitikpi and Aretha Oluwakemi Asakitikpi. 2024. Bloomsbury Academic, \$100 (9781440865565).

This single volume provides a comprehensive overview of Nigeria, from geography to economy to religion and from culture to education, and includes a stand-out "Day in the Life" appendix.

Photographic Atlas of the Moon: A Comprehensive Guide for the Amateur Astronomer. By Robert Reeves. 2024. Firefly, \$49.95 (9780228104988).

After an astrophysics-based introduction, this atlas, illustrated with high-resolution pictures, offers a detailed description of the moon's major features, ideal for stargazers.

The Solar System. 3rd ed. Ed. by Joy Crelin. 3v. 2024. Salem, \$395 (9781637007914).

This fully updated, comprehensive work strikes an ideal balance between accessibility and academic depth in its thorough exploration of all things solar system.

What Does the Constitution Actually Say? A Non-Boring Guide to How Our Democracy Is Supposed to Work. By Ben Sheehan. 2024. Black Dog & Leventhal, \$19.99 (9780762489053).

This down-to-earth handbook walks readers through the U.S. Constitution with concise, charmingly unpretentious explanations, wonderfully suited for anyone who wants to speak authoritatively but simply about our founding document.

The World Atlas of Honey. By C. Marina Marchese. 2024. Univ. of California, \$35 (9780520397705).

The author, a certified honey sommelier, walks readers through an overview of all aspects of honey and bee behavior followed by geographic sections on more than 90 individual locales, accompanied by brilliant photographs and notes about each region's notable honey sources.



to parts of the U.S. from northwest Texas to western North Carolina and eastern Virginia. Some species overlap, but others may differ in abundance. Also, the author emphasizes that readers will need additional field guides to safely identify species. Despite this, the book serves as a useful introduction for new foragers looking to explore the world of wild plants and mushrooms. —*Kevin McDonough*

The Handy Law Answer Book. 2nd ed.
By David L. Hudson.

2025. 432p. illus. Visible Ink, paper, \$29.95 (9781578595921); e-book (9781578598731). 349.73.

This concise, common-sense, authoritative guide will settle a lot of heated arguments as it unpacks “the complexities of the legal system.” Jargon-free chapters explain U.S. law regarding federal and state courts, criminal procedure, personal injury, employment, credit, bankruptcy, family, and immigration. U.S. constitutional law is explained with special emphasis on the Bill of Rights and the Fourteenth Amendment. For example, the chapter covering the Bill of Rights settles the thorny dispute about an official American religion: “Contrary to what many Americans believe, the USA is not a Christian nation.” In a similar fashion, the chapter on immigration law explains the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act and states unabashedly that banning certain groups of immigrants is not a new idea in America. With clear, no-nonsense language, descriptions, and explanations, this fact-based guide tells it

like it is and is confidently recommended for general public-library and secondary-school collections. Politically unbiased, it may serve well to stimulate calm, productive, genial debate. —*Art Lichtenstein*

Historical Dictionary of Holocaust Cinema. 2nd ed.

By Robert C. Reimer and Carol J. Reimer.

2024. 402p. illus. Rowman & Littlefield, \$180 (9781538184370); e-book (9781538184387). 791.43.

This update of the 2012 edition begins with a 16-page chronology of relevant events and sample films, from 1933 to 2024. The lengthy introduction provides background and context on the Holocaust and associated films over the years. Most of the volume consists of alphabetically arranged entries on documentaries, narrative features, shorts, and television productions. More 100 articles cover titles produced between 1940 and 2023 that reflect different sides of the Holocaust and a variety of film genres; principal historical figures and a few themes are also addressed. Entries about films usually include main figures, plot, and analysis; most films come from Europe and the U.S. Entries range from a paragraph to four pages long, and most include cross-references. A few film stills dot the volume. A filmography listing 950 relevant films and an extensive categorical bibliography conclude the book. The writing is clear with a focus on the facts. This reference will interest film enthusiasts as well as history buffs. —*Lesley Farmer*

Rome Before Rome: The Legends That Shaped the Romans.

By Philip Matyszak.

May 2025. 224p. illus. Thames & Hudson, \$24.95 (9780500028315). 398.20937.

The history of Rome is legendary, but the legends before Rome became an empire are less well known. This book addresses that knowledge gap engagingly. Matyszak (*A Walk through Ancient Rome*, 2024) points out that legends, unlike myth and folklore, are grounded in real historical settings and are fundamental to culture. As the book's introduction asserts, “one can learn a lot about a society from its legends.” For instance, the myth of the wolf's twins as Rome's founders is perhaps less compelling than the legend of a woman named Roma who spearheaded the burning of sailors' ships to end their wanderings; those sailors realized the location's advantages and named the city after her. Eight chapters chronologically cover major eras that preceded the formal designation of Rome, from its chaos state to Rome's republic. Each chapter also links the past to current contexts. Illustrations and topical sidebars dot the text. A “dramatis personae,” a glossary, a bibliography, and an index conclude the volume. The writing is clear and engaging, making this a good fit for the general reader. —*Lesley Farmer*

Today's Crime and Punishment Issues: Democrats and Republicans.

Ed. by Angela D. Madden.

2025. 352p. illus. Bloomsbury Academic, \$100 (9781440873324); e-book (9798216172437). 364.973.

Editor Madden deserves enthusiastic praise for compiling a remarkably dispassionate, unbiased, and authoritatively sourced summary of contrasting political attitudes about the thorniest challenges facing America today. Twenty-five concise chapters examine complicated, highly politicized issues including online extremism, environmental crime, gun control, immigration, police militarization, and reproductive rights. A cleverly designed, consistent chapter format makes it easy to compare and contrast opinions found on both sides of the political aisle. Every chapter opens with an “At a Glance” topic description along with several brief statements of Republican and Democratic attitudes on the topic. Next are an extended topic examination and an expanded, detailed expression of the beliefs held by members of each party. The chapter “Cyberviolence and Online Extremism,” for example, indicates that Republicans “support the use of force against domestic and international terrorist threats, including those revealed through cyber investigations.” In comparison, Democrats “believe legislation like the Patriot Act is a slippery slope with respect to unauthorized online surveillance violating constitutional rights.” Strongly recommended for public and academic collections, this compilation will be welcomed by anyone seeking a calm, unbiased appraisal of America's squirrely political climate. —*Art Lichtenstein*

Opinions throughout History: LGBTQ+ Rights.

By Micah L. Issitt.

2025. 648p. illus. Grey House, \$195 (9798891790728); e-book (9798891790735). 323.3.

The twenty-fifth volume in Grey House's Opinions throughout History series is an in-depth look at the history of LGBTQ+ rights in 28 chapters. An impactful introduction addresses the backlash against acceptance of the fact that sexuality and gender are fluid and are partially social constructs, a term the author defines as a fight by those in power (aka the patriarchy) to maintain a status quo. This is followed by a timeline of significant events from 1075 BCE to 2024. Each chapter begins with a brief introduction, a bullet list of topics discussed, and a list of documents covered. The several-pages-long main essays include “Colonial Morality: Male Queerness in the Colonial Era (1610–1700)” and “War on Trans Identity: The Imagined Culture War and the Trans Threat (2017–present),” and end with a list of works cited, a conclusion, and discussion questions. Touching on historical documents as well as contemporary topics like conversion therapy, the trans bathroom debate, and Moms for Liberty, this single volume covers a lot of necessary ground and puts the fight for LGBTQ+ rights in powerful context. —*Susan Maguire*

YAJC: The inclusion of discussion questions is just one facet of this important reference work that makes it ideal for high-school libraries. SM.

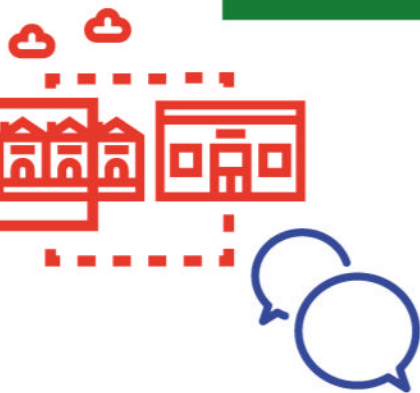
Visible Ink Press is distributed by Publishers Group West



Trade Secrets

Reference by Mail

By Julia Smith



Rachel Kinnon is the Jail and Reentry Services Manager at San Francisco Public Library (SFPL), and it's this library's Mellon grant (Expanding Information Access for Incarcerated People) that helped fund the revision of the *Standards for Library Services for the Incarcerated or Detained* (ALA Editions, 2024). Reference by Mail services are among the few lifelines between incarcerated people and the outside world. *Booklist* Senior Editor, Books for Youth, Julia Smith talked to Kinnon about this vital program.

SMITH: *Can you begin by describing the Reference by Mail program?*

KINNON: We very much believe that incarcerated patrons are public library patrons who can't access the library for the time being. We think it's a responsibility of public libraries to provide services of whatever kind they can to people who are incarcerated. SFPL has responded to more than 16,200 letters since we began the service in 2018.

SMITH: *How does the service work?*

KINNON: It's really a return to old-school reference that librarians did before the internet; we mail printed responses to physical letters. Right now, SFPL's rules state that we'll respond to two letters per patron per month. This limit is simply due to capacity. We're currently at a four- to five-month delay, which is heartbreaking. Nevertheless, we do respond to every single letter.

SMITH: *What kinds of questions do you tend to get?*

KINNON: We get all kinds of questions! Some of the most common questions we get are pop-culture based (e.g., song lyrics or artwork to use as models because a person is making art inside). We don't use ChatGPT; we rely on our skills as librarians and our access to reliable information.

We also receive a lot of questions about reentry resources as people are getting ready to get out or are preparing for the parole board. Questions about housing, jobs, directions from the bus station—these are often life-changing, and people are not getting this information and support inside the prison.

And we do hear back from people. One person came into our main branch not long ago and told a librarian there how our Reference-by-Mail librarian sent him information that helped him with his reentry plans. Without that information, he didn't think he would have been paroled. That's exactly what we're trying to do! We provide information, but we also want to get our patrons into their public library when they get out and have them learn that the library is a supportive, safe, inclusive space that they can get resources from.

SMITH: *Can you talk a little more about why it's important for public libraries to offer services like Reference by Mail to incarcerated people?*

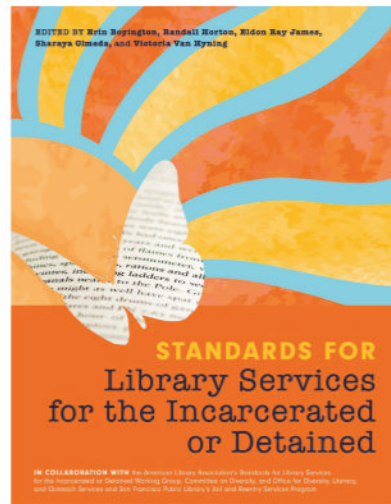
KINNON: Reference by Mail done by people on the outside is useful even when there is a library inside the facility for a couple of reasons.

One of them is, due to severe understaffing inside facilities, librarians often have to run both the general-use library and the law library, and, by law, they have to prioritize the law library. Additionally, prison librarians often don't have internet. We work closely with librarians at San Quentin, and the filters on those computers now prevent librarians from accessing websites with sheet music. There are a lot of musicians there, so these people now write to us. So even when there are great librarians, like at San Quentin, they often can't access information even if they do have capacity.

The other reason that this service is really important is that, while we work within the rules and content restrictions of the prisons, we are public librarians. Our mandate is not the same as prison librarians'. As such, we're allowed to push the limits of what's allowed inside of a prison without fear of repercussions. We might get a letter returned to us if the mail room says it can't go through to a patron, but we're not going to have any consequences for trying to provide that information.

One example of this is how we answer questions about revolutionary Black figures and philosophies. There are facilities that think that any revolutionary Black thinking constitutes, in their words, "a threat to safety and security of the institution." So, if someone asks about George Jackson or the history of the Attica Uprising, we will send that information in, while a prison librarian might be more cautious. But it's people's history, it's revolutionary thought, and it's needed to change or push back or live within the system.

See "Notes from the Field: Reference by Mail with Rachel Kinnon" on booklistonline.com for Reference by Mail Program Resources.



Adult Fiction

General Fiction

The Accidental Favorite.

By Fran Littlewood.

June 2025. 320p. Holt, \$29.99 (9781250857118); e-book (9781250857125).

A British family gathers for matriarch Vivienne's seventieth birthday in an all-glass house in the countryside. When a tree falls, Patrick, Vivienne's husband and father to Alex, Nancy, and Eva, rushes to save only one of his daughters. Everyone is fine, but his actions set off a series of events that threaten to unravel this successful family. Alex is struggling with her surprise third baby and getting little help from her husband. Wealthy Eva, who is treating the family to this vacation, is hiding the fact that she married her annoying boyfriend, meaning his odious son is now part of the family. And Nancy is dealing with professional troubles while her beloved daughter is far away with her father. Littlewood (*Amazing Grace Adams*, 2023) again has her finger on the pulse of the woman on the edge, balancing an impressive cast of characters and flashbacks to the girls' upbringing, slowly revealing the sources of the familial tension. As the house fills with a mysterious odor (it's a metaphor), readers will gladly go along on this wild ride. —Susan Maguire

Albion.

By Anna Hope.

June 2025. 368p. Harper, \$28.99 (9780063427150).

After the death of the patriarch of Albion, a stately English manor passed down for seven generations, his family gathers for a funeral. Among them are long-suffering wife Grace, alternately adored or spurned; youngest daughter Isa, always the outsider; son Milo, dealing with lingering boarding school trauma through various addictions; and oldest daughter and heir Frannie, who returned home for a decade to work with her failing father to rewind Albion's thousand acres for future generations. A mysterious young woman, probably a half sister, also arrives from America. Over four days, Hope (*Expectation*, 2020) turns these seemingly self-indulged, trope figures into relatable, believable characters, filling in backstories and defining relationships, all bolstered by a richly realized supporting cast. Crushing inheritance taxes seem certain to end Frannie's crusade to return Albion to its natural, self-sustaining state—will she be forced to sell the Joshua Reynolds family portrait or parcel off land to developers? And where did the family's immense wealth originate? This is an engaging story wrapped around crucial contemporary issues, resulting in a rich, satisfying read. —Kathleen McBroom

Alive in the Merciful Country.

By A. L. Kennedy.

May 2025. 384p. Saraband, \$25.95 (9781916812284).

Anna's anxieties began long before the pandemic shuttered England. Hers was a

constricted, unhappy childhood, and just when her breakout year at university promised boundless avenues for expression, she was sexually assaulted. To combat the trauma, she joined a street theater/activist group, where her alter ego, Annanka Ladystrong, could perform acts of joy and bravery. Then Buster joined the troupe, and Anna's newly won confidence became imperiled once again. She thought she had put the trauma of those years behind her, but a chance encounter with Buster triggers her latent rage and despair. As lockdown constricts her world, Anna writes a journal about her troubled past and her cherished present as a mother and teacher, presenting a vision of a more settled life, until one day, a manuscript is dropped at her doorstep. Buster, it seems, has written his own account, revealing a violent sociopath who could still cause her harm. Sharp-eyed Kennedy (*The Little Snake*, 2018) displays a facile and canny dexterity in shaping a dual narrative tackling issues of betrayal and abuse with individual and national implications. —Carol Haggas

All the Mothers.

By Domenica Ruta.

May 2025. 304p. Random, \$30 (9780593734056); e-book (9780593734063).

Ruta (*Last Day*, 2019) explores themes of motherhood and chosen family in her second novel. New York City magazine editor Sandy has had a run of bad boyfriends, but Justin takes the cake. Window cleaner by day, mediocre musician by night, Justin strings Sandy along despite hostility from his mother and his delusions of stardom. When Sandy gets pregnant and decides to keep the baby, who she'll name Rosie, Justin's mother lets slip that this isn't his first child. Abandoned by her shallow upper-middle-class friends and remaining family members and demoted at work, Sandy becomes obsessed with finding Justin's ex, Steph, and Rosie's half sibling. When the two women and their children finally meet, what could have been a disaster turns into something wholly unexpected. Funny, tender, and messy, Ruta's book examines single motherhood and what it takes to cultivate a loving environment amidst financial uncertainty. This heartfelt portrait of an unconventional family will charm readers. —Rebecca Hopman

American Mythology.

By Giano Cromley.

July 2025. 304p. Doubleday, \$28 (9780593688182); e-book (9780593688199).

Bigfoot exists, and the Basic Bigfoot Society members, Jute and Vergil, know this in their bones. They have built a friendship on monthly meetings, annual expeditions to find the elusive creature, and a deep belief in the unknowable and unconquerable. When the country's foremost expert on Bigfoot, Dr. Marcus Bernard, asks them to allow him on their next expedi-

tion (and thrillingly, to bring a documentarian along), it seems like all of their dreams have come true. Exasperated by her father's antics and worried that he is about to have the wool pulled over his eyes in a huge way, Vergil's daughter Rye joins them on their quest, and they find a lot more than they bargained for. Cromley, in his adult debut novel, takes the reader on a journey that is much more complicated than it looks; using immersive prose and hilarious, relatable characters, he writes of deep familial relationships that persist despite different viewpoints and ways of life and forces his protagonists, and therefore the readers, to examine what belief is—and how far we would go to keep believing. —Lily Hunter

Autocorrect.

By Etgar Keret. Tr. by Jessica Cohen and Sonda Silverston.

May 2025. 208p. Riverhead, \$28 (9780593717233); e-book (9780593717257).

In his seventh collection of stories, endlessly inventive Israeli writer Keret (*Fly Already*, 2019) crafts 33 exceedingly short prose morsels—most only a few pages—that explode like tiny starbursts and embrace a speculative edge. “Point of No Return” delves into simulations within simulations and unpacks tangled relationships among a multiplicity of husbands, wives, house cleaners, and other affair partners. In “Eating Olives at the End of the World,” a cashier exchanges the last jar of olives for a warm embrace, showcasing the power of physical connection in the face of an unimaginable fate. Like so much of Keret's fiction, these stories balance absurdist humor with deep human truths, as in “Director's Cut,” which features a movie that runs for 73 years. A viewer who was “born eight months into the screening and grew up in the dark cinema, transfixed by the screen” emerges elderly and overwhelmed, having mistaken the movie for a life. Keret aficionados will be satisfied by this book, and readers new to the author's work will take away a representative sampling from this introductory tasting. —Diego Báez

The Brittle Age.

By Donatella Di Pietrantonio. Tr. by Ann Goldstein.

June 2025. 192p. Europa, paper, \$18 (9798889660873).

Winner of the Strega Prize, Di Pietrantonio's (*A Sister's Story*, 2022) latest novel, once again translated from Italian by Goldstein, conjures a crime's haunting impact across three generations of family, friends, and neighbors in an Italian mountain community. During 2020's COVID-19 lockdown, Amanda leaves university in Milan and returns home to live with her mother Lucia. Newly separated from Amanda's father, Dario, Lucia also has a strained relationship with Amanda. Lucia voices fears of losing her daughter to her downstairs neighbor, who responds presciently: “Children—there are so many ways of losing them.” Lucia's narration spans decades lived in the shadow of Dente del Lupo,

a mountain once popular for hiking and camping and home to shepherds and sheep. Lucia was a young bystander to horrific events on the mountain one night in 1992 and then again at a 1994 trial. She now lives burdened with complex survivor's guilt and with her father's forceful bequest of Dente del Lupo property. The novel's five compelling parts change settings and focus while effectively serving Lucia's story. —*Kelly Fojtik*

★ **Bug Hollow.**
By Michelle Huneven.

June 2025. 288p. Penguin, \$29 (9780593834879); e-book (9780593834886).

Huneven's (*Search*, 2023) sixth novel is a gift: top-drawer fiction and a family story that speaks of the joys, sorrows, and surprising possibilities of human connection. In the mid-1970s, Phil and Sibyl Samuelson, their three children, and little dog call Altadena home. Sally, eight, is an artistic, free-range kid. Middle child Katie likes to read and stay under the radar. College-bound golden boy Ellis drives off on a summer road trip with classmates

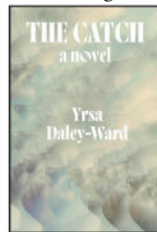


but meets Julia, causing a change in plans. Ellis informs his parents that he will not return home for the summer, putting his matriculation and scholarship in question. Phil is concerned; Sibyl is furious. She tracks Ellis down at a run-down rental nirvana called Bug Hollow. Ellis loves life there with kind, pretty Julia and her hippie friends. Then the unthinkable happens. Over decades, the Samuelson family grows and weaves friends into their lives. Serendipitous meetings invite redo's, showing the beauty of life's circular nature. Readers will be charmed by a sense of nostalgia and interdependence that speaks to the best in humanity. Fans of Anne Tyler will enjoy Huneven's strong sense of place, quirky menagerie of characters, and the intriguing, relevant issues the Samuelson family navigates through chapters of their life together. —*Kelly Fojtik*

★ **The Catch.**
By Yrsa Daley-Ward.

June 2025. 352p. Norton/Liveright, \$28.99 (9781324092513).

There isn't a box big enough to contain this debut novel. Poet, writer, and actress Daley-Ward ventured into the world of fiction and created a genre of her own. Twins Clara and Dempsey, allegedly identical but as different as two people can be, lost their mother when they were infants. Thirty years later, Clara meets a woman in a department store who shares their mother's name, looks, and history. It doesn't matter that this woman seems to be the same age as Clara and Dempsey—Clara is convinced she is their mother. Dempsey believes she is a con artist. In the same way that Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody" cycles through a ballad, opera, and hard rock, Daley-Ward melds surrealism and sf with contemporary fiction and a sprinkling of titillating romance. Along the way, she explores the many dimensions of Black female identity, with a special focus on how Black female mental health is often ignored or mistreated. In the first title in Liveright's Well-Read Black Girls Books series, chosen by WRBG founder Glory Edim, Daley-Ward illuminates the complex workings of the mind in a tale filled with intrigue and speculation that will leave readers guessing long after the final pages. —*Enobong Tommelleo*



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★ **The Compound.**
By Aisling Rawle.

June 2025. 304p. Random, \$29 (9780593977279); e-book (9780593977293).

Irish author Rawle's debut is a masterful, captivating story of materialism and the search for meaning amidst climate crisis and economic instability. Twentysomething Lily wakes up in the Compound, the setting of a long-running reality show. She finds the other nine women who are participating in the show scattered around the property. They see the improvements made by the last set of contestants while they wait for the show's 10 male contestants to cross the desert to join them. At first, the rules are straightforward. At dawn, each resident must share a bed with a participant of the opposite gender or be eliminated. When only nine men arrive from the desert, the women know one of them will be sent home immediately. Residents complete communal tasks to win rewards, alternating between building community and competing with each other. Meanwhile, unseen producers manufacture conflict, while Lily strives to be the last woman standing, reaping unlimited rewards and never returning to her previous life. With nuanced characters and a sharp examination of the tearing threads of modern society, *The Compound* is an astounding must-read. —*Laura Chanoux*



★ **Crown.**
By Evanthia Bromiley.

June 2025. 288p. Grove, \$27 (9780802164629); e-book (9780802164636).

At the start Bromiley's debut, Jude Woods is a mother of two, very soon to be three, and she is about to be evicted. Her contractions begin just as the power is shut off, and she is rushed to the hospital. Before going, she warns her children to stay hidden, knowing that if they are found alone, they will be taken from her. The children, for their part, set out along the riverbank to find a new home for their family. The heart of this book is family, beautifully illustrated through straightforward prose written from the perspectives of Jude and her children. Jude, laboring in the hospital, remembers anecdotes from her life, specifically the difficulty of raising children within a system that both de-

spises poverty and accentuates it. The children's world, though, is smaller and a little kinder, as they take risks like going to the store on their own in order to find a new, welcoming place to live. *Crown* is a beautiful story rife with realism and hope. —*Lily Hunter*

Dear Teacher.
By Maddalena Vaglio Tanet.

May 2025. 272p. HarperVia, paper, \$17.99 (9780063339170); e-book (9780063339194).

"Instead of going to school, the teacher went into the woods." The gripping opening sentence in Tanet's debut novel carries an undercurrent of menace. One wonders, what dark force compelled her to do so? Believing, in error, that she played a role in the alleged death by suicide of her 11-year-old student Giovanna, the teacher, Silvia, is wracked by guilt. This is small-town Italy in the 1970s, when mental health struggles were concealed, increasing the harm. Labeled as an "odd but unassuming" woman and carrying significant trauma from her own boarding school education, Silvia can only think of one escape, to disappear into the woods. It takes outsider, asthmatic student Martino, who has moved from Turin to the small town, to find Silvia and preserve her precarious existence. The setting, on the foothills of the Alps, is beautifully rendered, as is the sustaining if dark, Grimm-like forest. Tanet fictionalized the story of a family member, a teacher, who vanished in a similar fashion decades ago. Though at times the momentum is interrupted, *Dear Teacher* has a powerfully hypnotic draw. —*Poornima Apte*

YA: YAs who enjoy literary fiction will relate to the student Martino and the teacher as they are each caught up in struggles of their own. **PA.**

Family & Other Calamities.
By Leslie Gray Streeter.

June 2025. 255p. Amazon/Lake Union, \$28.99 (9781662527616); paper, \$16.99 (9781662527630).

Dawn Roberts-Shaffer always wanted to be a journalist, and now she runs a successful L.A.-based entertainment news startup. She rarely goes back home, but she has to return to Baltimore to deliver a portion of her late husband Dale's ashes to his brother. On the plane trip, she runs into Joe Perkins, her former mentor, who stole a story from her that won him a Pulitzer. That's bad enough, but now Joe is making a movie of his (her) story, and the script paints Dawn in an unflattering light. Dawn's sister Tonya contributed to the story at great personal cost, and now she feels Dawn is taking advantage of her to get her revenge. Add in tensions between Dawn's family, which is Black, and Dale's white family, and the interference of the pop diva Dawn was interviewing before she left L.A., and you have a romp that plumbs emotional depths of family ties and what we sacrifice to follow our dreams. Streeter's debut novel (succeeding the memoir, *Black Widow*, 2020) is a winner. —*Susan Maguire*

A Family Matter.

By Claire Lynch.

June 2025. 240p. Scribner, \$25.99 (9781668078891); e-book (9781668078914).

Heron, whose real name is Henry, has just been diagnosed with terminal cancer. Stoic, practical, and orderly, he cannot bring himself to tell this to his daughter, Maggie, who is married and has children of her own. He also cannot tell her how he has been divorced for longer than he has been married, and that his ex-wife, Dawn, was deeply in love with another woman. Mostly, he cannot bear to tell Maggie that her mother was taken from her by discriminatory lawyers, social workers, and judges, who saw Dawn's lesbianism as a perversion. In her poignant debut, Lynch explores themes of motherhood, midlife crises, and hiding one's honest self in the face of massive societal obstacles. She writes from several different characters' perspectives and time lines, giving the reader a beautiful story of the struggles families face. In the end, though this book's main conflict is a tragic one, this is a story of hope and healing from a talented writer. —*Lily Hunter*

Far and Away.

By Amy Poeppel.

June 2025. 400p. Atria/Emily Bestler, paper, \$18.99 (9781668022856); e-book (9781668022870).

When Lucy's son Jack makes a careless mistake that gets him expelled days before his high-school graduation, it turns their summer into a nightmare. It doesn't help that her husband is spending the foreseeable future in a NASA biosphere in the desert, simulating the conditions of a Mars expedition, so that she's managing the crisis solo. Then Lucy stumbles across a social media post from Greta, a Berliner offering up her apartment in exchange for a home in Dallas, where her husband has been offered a job. A summer away seems like the perfect answer to Lucy's problems. But Lucy and Greta couldn't be more different. Lucy lives in a tech-filled smart home full of family, animals, and unfettered chaos, and Greta's art-filled apartment feels like a museum full of fragile objects. As their house swap unfolds, both women find their lives changing in unexpected ways. Poeppel's (*The Sweet Spot*, 2023) warm, witty fish-out-of-water tale is a deftly plotted exploration of family, friendship, and marriage, featuring two entertaining and relatable families. Full of light humor, heartfelt emotion, and a thoughtful story arc, this clever family dramedy is ideal for fans of Beth O'Leary and Curtis Sittenfeld. —*Nanette Donohue*

The Fire Concerto.

By Sarah Landenwich.

June 2025. 352p. Union Square, \$28.99 (9781454956822); e-book (9781454956839).

Landenwich makes her debut with a captivating novel centered on Clara Bishop, a

pianist whose career was derailed by a tragic fire that left her scarred and unable to play. Now working as a bartender in Austin, Clara is drawn back into the world of music when she receives an invitation from her strict piano teacher, who has recently passed away. At the gathering, Clara reconnects with other former students and discovers that each has been bequeathed a gift. Clara receives an antique metronome, which she suspects may have belonged to volatile composer Aleksander Skarza, rumored to have been murdered by his talented student Constantia Pleyel. As Clara investigates the significance of the metronome and her teacher's past, she unravels secrets that could change music history and rekindle her passion for playing. The narrative is enriched with letters and notes from the past, providing a vibrant storytelling experience, with well-developed characters and a thrilling pace that leads to a dramatic conclusion. Perfect for those that like a little mystery with a classical-music tie-in, as in books by Brendan Slocumb. —*Lucy Roehrig*

Flashlight.

By Susan Choi.

June 2025. 464p. Farrar, \$30 (9780374616373); e-book (9780374616380).

Choi's (*Trust Exercise*, 2019) latest novel feels leisurely as she brilliantly shines the titular flashlight on each of her characters, catching their habits and quirks, exposing their intimacies. That flashlight (as both leitmotif and physical object) appears in the prologue as 10-year-old Louisa and her father, carrying the light as precaution, take a walk along a coastal breakwater in Japan, where the family—Louisa, her white mother Anne, and her ethnic-Korean, Japanese born and raised father with his multiple appellations (Seok to his birth family, Hiroshi to the Japanese, and Serk in the U.S.)—is temporarily living. That night, he disappears, and Louisa is found alone, washed up on shore. Mother and daughter return to the U.S. to pick up their lives, but Louisa was mostly Serk's child and can barely tolerate being tethered to Anne. After falling mysteriously ill, Anne is diagnosed with MS and slowly disintegrates. Her estranged firstborn child, Tobias, with whom she briefly reunited when he was a teen, sporadically appears and disappears through the decades but proves remarkably pivotal in addressing dysfunctional, multigenerational needs and losses. Choi, also the progeny of a Korean father and white American mother, pushes the boundaries of family, ethnicity, society, country, and history by challenging, parsing, and piecing together the complicated multitudes of tangled identities. —*Terry Hong*



HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: Choi's first novel since the National Book Award-winning *Trust Exercise* (2019) is already racking up high ratings on Goodreads and NetGalley. Prepare for demand!

Fresh, Green Life.

By Sebastian Castillo.

June 2025. 160p. Soft Skull, paper, \$15.95 (9781593767914); e-book (9781593767921).

Castillo dramatizes a version of himself that is both vain and wryly self-aware in a tale that takes place over a single New Year's Eve. The narrator, also named Castillo, having said not a word to another human in nearly a year, receives an invitation to a house party from a former professor who promises that Castillo's college crush, Maria, as well as some friends, will be there. As Castillo slowly makes his way to the suburbs of Philadelphia on public transport, he muses about his life as a lazy, confident, and sometimes creatively fraudulent student; his reasoning behind his recent resignation as an overstretched adjunct professor; his former use of amphetamines and related concerning episode with his heart; and his new stringent exercise regime and ascetic existence. His academic floundering and overstated self-assurance bring to mind the poet in Ben Lerner's *Leaving the Atocha Station* (2011), as Castillo's pretentious persona is similarly jaded yet endearingly idealistic. Castillo's hypnotic, funny, and wonderfully surprising novel, an exemplary example of autofiction, wraps up the reader and takes them on a fascinating journey. —*Alexander Moran*

Fulfillment.

By Lee Cole.

June 2025. 336p. Knopf, \$29 (9780593802861); e-book (9780593802878).

In "Nowheresville," Kentucky, Emmett Shaw barely ekes out a living, unloading packages at a massive distribution center. Dreams of completing a screenplay are on hold. Emmett's simmering discontent goes into overdrive when his stepbrother Joel moves back home with his wife, Alice. Kentucky is an anthropological exercise for the New York-based Joel, whose one claim to fame is a collection of academic essays about the rural poor. Trapped in a failing marriage, Alice finds solace in Emmett's down-to-earth persona. The scene is set for explosive encounters. Cole (*Grounds-keeping*, 2022) mixes the angst and insecurity of class and poverty to craft a Molotov cocktail he lobs with exacting precision. He juxtaposes breathtaking descriptions of the Appalachian countryside against the ravages of late-stage capitalism that have stripped the state's soul to the bone. "What he longed for, what he found himself dreaming of, in the eddies of time that filled his days, was an ordinary life. Nine-to-five. Meat and potatoes. *Wheel of Fortune*. Church on Sunday. The quiet, brave persistence of the mainstream, never fighting the current," Cole writes of Joel. It's no surprise—in today's America, an ordinary life feels like the best kind of succor. —*Poornima Apte*

Girls Girls Girls.

By Shoshana von Blanckensee.

June 2025. 384p. Putnam, \$30 (9780593718445).

Who are we in and outside of our relationships? With heartfelt introspection and refreshing self-discovery, von Blanckensee's coming-of-age novel explores this question of how our identities coalesce with those—friends, family, lovers—who hold our attention. Set in the 1990s, *Girls Girls Girls* follows its queer teenage protagonist Hannah as she departs Long Beach, New York, leaving behind her Orthodox Jewish mother, for what she imagines as a socially liberating San Francisco. Accompanied by her girlfriend Sam, Hannah's journey brings an exciting sense of adventure, invoking deep empathy for the human desire to belong. Navigating financial challenges, relationship anxieties, and intense grief, Hannah's first-person narration is both strong and vulnerable. This balance situates maturity as an enduring curiosity to understand the world, even in moments of fear. A largely plot-driven novel, von Blanckensee's fast-paced debut sensitively portrays how the process of showing one's authentic self is a return home. Readers interested in witnessing a character's growth may be taken by the novel's exploration of what it means to "[b]egin and end. Then begin again." —*Lillian Liao*

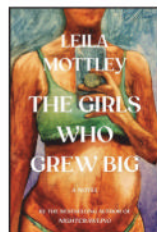
YA: *Teens undeterred by scenes of stripping and drug use will find an accessible teenage perspective and relatable discussions of grief and fear.* *LL.*

★ The Girls Who Grew Big.

By Leila Mottley.

June 2025. 352p. Knopf, \$28 (9780593801123); e-book (9780593801130).

"I'll put it this way: teen moms, like Florida, are the country's favorite scapegoat." Simone, one of the main characters in Mottley's latest compelling and uplifting novel (following *Nightcrawling*, 2022), makes this observation after giving birth at age 16 to twins in her wayward boyfriend's truck. It is a portentous observation, and one that causes Simone to



form a community of support and mutual aid in Padua Beach, her small Florida panhandle town. The novel is narrated from the alternating points of view of three of the young women in the "Group"—Simone, Emory, and the newly arrived Adela, each with their own distinct experience of teen motherhood. Mottley is an elegant and expressive writer, giving each of her unforgettable characters a fullness and relatability that will appeal to many readers. She also evokes facets of motherhood, alienation, first love, and vulnerability through poetic and stirring imagery: "The bow of our bellies smooth and arched like a glorious moon that can no longer be eclipsed. In these weeks, we start to worry as much as we start to wonder: Who is curled inside us, who are we to be the sanctuary for someone to curl inside?" Give to fans of Brit Bennett's *The*

Mothers (2016) and Kirstin Valdez Quade's *The Five Wounds* (2021). —*Allison Escoto*

YA: *The teen characters, realistic exploration of issues facing young mothers, and positive portrayals of friendships and relationships will appeal to older YAs.* *AE.*

Great Black Hope.

By Rob Franklin.

June 2025. 320p. Summit, \$28.99 (9781668077436).

A young, queer Black man navigates a complex set of circumstances in Franklin's dynamic and excellent debut novel. The product of a stable, successful family, Smith is primed for upward mobility and is duly surprised to find himself in legal trouble for drug possession. As he's still coping with the recent loss of his friend and roommate, Elle, the consequences of his arrest set him on a course of soul-searching and introspection, as he feels trapped in the liminal spaces of race and class. Smith is a character worth spending time with, full of pathos and insightful observations as he lives through his wayward twenties. "He loved the huddled musk of bodies in a crowded restaurant, the slink of a martini glass, and even the look of an olive, though the taste he found revolting; he loved the girls in their barely-there dresses, their faces meeting over a flame; how there was always another party, an address sent without context by one of his bad-influence friends." Franklin deftly develops his characters, vividly rendering their perceptions and bringing the reader into the scene through elegant prose. —*Allison Escoto*

★ Hazel Says No.

By Jessica Berger Gross.

June 2025. 352p. Hanover Square, \$28.99 (9781335015129).

With humor and heart, Berger Gross introduces readers to Hazel Greenberg Blum and her family. The four of them have moved from Brooklyn to rural Maine after dad Gus Blum accepts a professorship at Riverburg College. On Hazel's first day of school, her principal



propositions her, setting off a chain of events that will affect the family in ways both unfair and fortunate. Claire, Hazel's mother, is immediately on the offensive, while Gus uses his connections at the college to search for justice. Wolf, Hazel's little brother, is trying to adjust to his new school and make a name for himself in that season's play, but the principal's daughter is also in the cast. The community rallies around their beloved administrator, further distancing the Blums from their old, safe life in the city, and things get even worse when Gus is reviled after making a gauche comment while teaching. But through it all, Hazel continues to stand up for herself. Each family member has their own point of view, and readers will root for all of them. Eleven-year-old Wolf is particularly witty as he inserts himself into the adults' conversations. Suggest this gem to readers of *Family Family* (2024), by Laurie Frankel. —*Cari Dubiel*

Heart, Be at Peace.

By Donal Ryan.

May 2025. 208p. Viking, \$28 (9780593834640); e-book (9780593834657).

Ryan (*The Queen of Dirt Island*, 2023) offers another magnificent dive into the hearts, minds, and lives of a rural Irish community grappling with personal trauma and national problems. Told from 21 different points of view, the novel immerses readers into a full cast of characters, each chapter revealing a small piece of the larger narratives woven throughout the book. From a damning photograph taken during a wild night in Amsterdam to kidnappings, scam artists, gangs, robberies, and murder, the plot offers no shortage of action, but the real drama comes from each character's reaction to the events. Ryan's prose is lyrical and authentic, capturing the spirit of each voice with shifting dialects and inner reflections, unveiling the anxieties, struggles, and heartbreak of a community plagued by a drug crisis, greed, and secrets. Readers will find it helpful to maintain a list of characters and their connections while reading, but it is well worth it, as Ryan's beautiful novel packs a quiet but powerful punch. —*Grace Rosean*

The Homemade God.

By Rachel Joyce.

June 2025. 336p. Dial, \$28 (9780593448298); e-book (9780593448304).

Just three calls. That's all it takes to upend the lives of the Kemp siblings. First, their father Vic, a popular artist, invites them to lunch to enthuse about his long-awaited latest painting and gush over his newfound love, the much, much younger Bella-Mae. Next, they get a text stating he's abandoning his London studio and moving with Bella-Mae to his vacation home, an aging Italian lakeside villa, where they're to be married. No invitation, but they should come visit. The third call comes days later: Vic has died, drowned in the lake he knew as well as his own bathtub. Neta, Susan, Iris, and Gustav, nicknamed Goose, rush to Lake Orta, ready to confront the enigmatic Bella-Mae over Vic's inexplicable death, the contents of his will, and the whereabouts of his promised final masterpiece. Over the course of her emotionally potent and psychologically chaotic family saga, Joyce (*Maureen*, 2023) reveals the toll of unresolved conflicts, the danger of taking family bonds for granted, and the power of art to assuage grief and longing. —*Carol Haggas*

I'll Be Right Here.

By Amy Bloom.

June 2025. 240p. Random, \$28 (9781984801722); e-book (9781984801739).

Bloom returns to fiction (following her 2022 memoir, *In Love*) with the story of a chosen family. After WWII, Gazala makes her way from Paris to New York, where Alma and Anne Cohen adopt her as an honorary sister. Gazala and her orphaned sibling, Samir, are reunited in New York, running a successful business and making a home in Poughkeepsie.

In time, their unconventional family expands from the Greats (Gazala, Samir, Alma, Anne, and Anne's partner, Honey) to include Anne's daughter, Lily, Lily's child, Harry, and Gazala and Samir's "foundling," Bea, none of whom follows a straightforward path to romantic love. The novel moves fluidly back and forth in time and between characters, peeling back the layers of a lifetime of love and loss. Throughout, the Cohen girls refer to the Dead People's Party, "a mental get-together of everyone you've ever known who mattered." In many ways, this novel exemplifies this idea, bringing together past and present versions of the Greats and their loved ones. Recommend to fans of Anne Tyler and Elizabeth Berg. —*Lindsay Harmon*

Just Beachy. By Wendy Wax.

June 2025. 304p. Berkley, paper, \$19 (978059335963); e-book (978059335987).

After five years as a respected police detective on a hit television show, Sydney Ryan has officially lost her meal ticket. An ill-advised plot twist leaves Sydney without a steady acting gig or reliable source of revenue. She retreats to Florida to regroup with her free-spirited grandmother, Lillian. When an art heist goes awry, Sydney and Lillian quickly learn that they can't count on a cast of supporting characters to save them or lucky breaks to magically appear before the next commercial. Taking place in Wax's (*The Break-Up Book Club*, 2021) popular Ten Beach Road universe, *Just Beachy* balances slapstick comedy with genuine emotional stakes as Sydney and Lillian reassess what's really important. Exploring family dynamics, career reinvention, and romantic intrigue, Sydney's journey of personal growth transforms her from a frustrated actress to an accomplished—if still amateur—detective. Fans of Mary Kay Andrews, Elin Hilderbrand, and Nancy Thayer's coastal fiction will appreciate *Just Beachy*'s compelling combination of humor, heartfelt vulnerability, and unexpected connection, all offering the comforting embrace of beach-town charm. —*Stephanie Turza*

Kakigori Summer. By Emily Itami.

June 2025. 336p. Mariner, \$30 (9780063432161); e-book (9780063432185).

When rising J-pop idol Ai gets caught with a married music executive, the resulting tabloid scandal shatters her image, and she becomes a national disgrace. The fallout draws in her two older sisters. Rei, a tightly controlled corporate professional living in London, debates whether to return to Tokyo to help, while Kiki tries to hold the family together with humor and resilience despite juggling her job, motherhood, and her own emotional load. Meanwhile, Ai retreats into herself, overwhelmed by the collapse of her carefully curated idol image and her own sense of self-worth. Told from alternating perspectives, the story unpacks each sister's

private struggles as they reunite at their childhood home for the summer. Itami's (*Fault Lines*, 2021) voice is sharp, funny, and deeply empathetic, weaving together wit and poignancy in a character-driven narrative that feels fresh, heartfelt, and painfully real. She deftly explores celebrity culture in Japan, the emotional toll of perfectionism, and the jagged, enduring bond between sisters who couldn't be more different but are bound by shared loss and love. —*Emily Park*

A Language of Limbs. By Dylín Hardcastle.

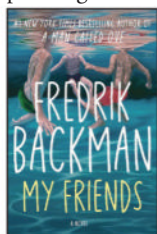
June 2025. 304p. Dutton, \$28 (9780593852712); e-book (9780593852736).

One night in Australia in 1972, a teenage girl's life story bifurcates into two "limbs." In limb one, she has sex with the girl next door and is violently ejected from her home by her parents. In limb two, she dreams of the act but suppresses her desire and conforms to social norms. Hardcastle (*Below Deck*, 2020) chooses the perfect metaphor for their story, because though the two limbs diverge, they remain attached to the same body. As the two versions unfold, one a marginalized, queer existence and the other a married, heteronormative life, they also parallel and converge in touchstone moments: love, sex, loss, and the AIDS epidemic. Of the image of her body in a wedding dress, the protagonist says, "It is two things at once . . . I imagine another picture, another story, unfolding somewhere else." Vivid and poignant, with flashes of the experimental and poetic, the novel serves as a record of queer life in Australia in the '70s and '80s and asks us to consider how and why we love. —*Emily Dziuban*

My Friends. By Fredrik Backman. Tr. by Neil Smith.

May 2025. 448p. Atria, \$29.99 (9781982112820); e-book (9781982112844).

Free of the foster-care system now that she's 18, Louisa is truly homeless, but she carries a postcard of one of the world's most famous paintings in her backpack for comfort and inspiration. Louisa is an aspiring artist, her sketch pads filled with drawings of cockroaches so beautiful they should be called butterflies. A chance meeting with a frail and dying man propels Louisa on an unimaginable journey as her postcard talisman almost literally comes to life. Lost within the panorama of the painting's seascape are the images of three teens seated at the end of a pier. Now, 25 years after the painting's creation, one of those teens comes to rescue Louisa and quite possibly himself in the process. What Backman did for curmudgeonly seniors in his beloved debut, *A Man Called Ove* (2014), he now does for obstreperous teens; namely, he renders them lovable beyond all reason. Their quirks, their fears, their bravado, their vulnerability all come



blazing through, exploding in isolated episodes of candor and harrowing moments of defensiveness. Irrepressible humor, boundless grief, and eternal loyalty coalesce in Backman's tribute to youthful imagination and unfettered faith in art's power to heal and nurture. —*Carol Haggas*

HD HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: Best-selling Backman's fans will be primed and intrigued by this fresh focus.

YA: *Backman holds a shining mirror to the tenacity of youthful friendships and the emotional outlets found in creative pursuits.* CH

The Nimbus. By Robert P. Baird.

June 2025. 352p. Holt, \$29.99 (9781250392657); e-book (9781250392640).

Baird's first novel gets its title from a mysterious glow that suddenly appears around toddler Luca, the son of Adrian Bennett, an impressive but single-minded divinity school professor in Chicago. Initial medical tests cannot explain the intermittent glow or why it is only visible to some. Curiously, Renata, Adrian's wife, who works hard to support his grand career ambitions, cannot see it and sometimes doubts others can. As Adrian gets increasingly cavalier with sharing Luca's luminescence, Renata is fiercely protective and feels herself drifting away from Adrian. Baird switches to the perspectives of others affected by Luca's glow: Paul, Adrian's graduate student, who is struggling to find his place in the world of academia, and Warren, Adrian's former classmate, who has inherited his parents' debts to a local loan shark. Like Peter Mendelsund's *Weepers* (2025), Baird's debut carefully considers the role of faith in a world largely devoid of it, as communities form around "the nimbus." Intriguing, entertaining, and often searing in its critiques of academia, this is also a fascinating portrait of a family pulled apart by ambition and unexpected events. —*Alexander Moran*

Notes on Infinity. By Austin Taylor.

June 2025. 400p. Macmillan/Celadon, \$29.99 (9781250376107); e-book (9781250376114).

Zoe is a brilliant Harvard student studying chemistry and trying desperately to earn the same validation that her father, an academic, lavishes on her older brother. She sees an opportunity for greatness in enigmatic Jake, who seems brilliant, driven, and completely unbothered by the unwritten rules of Harvard's hallowed halls. Together, they become a nearly unstoppable team in their development of a pharmaceutical that could stop cellular aging, essentially the fountain of youth in a pill. With a trajectory that echoes that of Elizabeth Holmes' Theranos, Taylor's debut provides an insider's glimpse into the high-stakes Ivy League climate and the potentially devastating personal consequences for those caught up in ambition beyond their abilities. Zoe and Jake, both barely out of their teens,

find themselves adrift and out of control in a dangerous house of cards of their own creation. The novel's focus is the breakneck pace of Zoe and Jake's success, leaving character development to play catch-up. This will interest readers who enjoy heady tales of academia and ambition or novels that delve into the underbelly of scam science. —*Heather Booth*

Oddbody.

By Rose Keating.

July 2025. 208p. Simon & Schuster, paper, \$17.99 (9781668061503).

Keating's debut is aptly named. It is fantastically odd, and it is all about bodies, specifically the ways they can be contorted and transformed. Ten short stories unfurl in tales of body horror that are not for the faint of heart. Even the ghosts have some semblance of physical presence, and they're equally grotesque. In "Squirm," a woman takes care of her father, who's a giant worm—and yes, he can talk and there are descriptions of his wiggly, slimy form, including when he gets severed. In another story, a young actress in a slasher movie is actually dismembered during filming and must put herself back together. Keating's female-driven cast is ripped open and prodded over and over, a reflection of how women are scrutinized in everyday life. There is also an element of magical realism that makes everyone around them oblivious to their strange

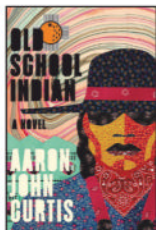
circumstances, further isolating them. Weird, bold, and violent, this collection is for horror readers who don't mind being uncomfortable in their own skin. —*Allison Cho*

Old School Indian.

By Aaron John Curtis.

May 2025. 352p. Zando/Hillman Grad, \$28 (9781638931454).

In Curtis' sharply comic and touching debut, middle-aged Abe Jacobs returns in 2016 to the Mohawk reservation in upstate New York where he was raised, in the desperate hope of curing the painful, debilitating, and potentially fatal autoimmune disease that has been afflicting him. Abe left home at 17 with the aim of becoming a poet, but settled for selling books in Miami and enduring an unsatisfying marriage with his college sweetheart Alexandria, who frequently gets involved with other lovers. Back on the reservation, Abe reunites with former friends and relatives, and attempts—with considerable skepticism—a course of healing led by his great-uncle Budge, who tells Abe, "Your body went old school Indian and conjured its own death." Curtis' most compelling creation is his narrator, Dominick Deer Woods, an alter-ego Abe created



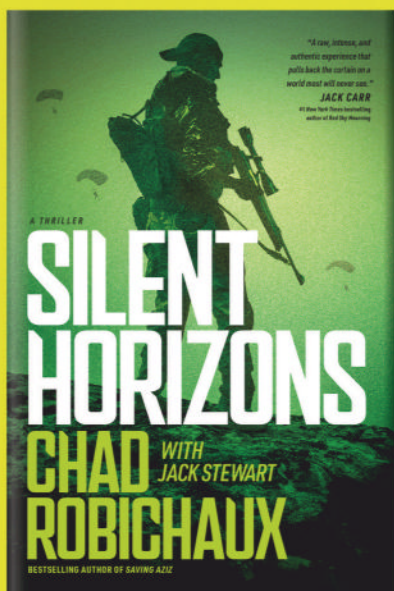
to give him courage during his first college poetry readings. Dominick is bright, angry, politically and historically aware, and generally the polar opposite of schlubby Abe, who is the target of some of the narrator's most caustic comments. The evolving relationship between the narrator and the anti-hero he observes and interferes with gives the novel its considerable power. —*Margaret Quamme*

The Ones We Loved.

By Tarisai Ngangura.

May 2025. 304p. Park Row, \$28.99 (9780778387589); e-book (9780369763372).

Journalist and photographer Ngangura presents a haunting first novel that will dazzle readers with the cadence of her carefully chosen words. At its heart, it is the story of two wounded souls: she is burdened by an unforgivable crime, and he is scarred by an unspeakable horror. Separately, they seek refuge and, against all odds, find each other and discover that they are still able to love. But can their love survive the weight of their pasts? Ngangura masterfully weaves together past and present, employing the rhythm and structure of Zimbabwean oral storytelling to immerse the reader in a deeply emotional journey. The prose flows like poetry and is all-encompassing, leading the reader through the ebb and flow of her characters' experiences as they move from anguish and isolation to



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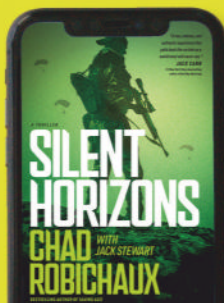
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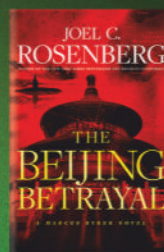
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love and hope. This is for readers who relish the sound and nuances of language and who are prepared to travel through a great tumult of emotions. *The Ones We Loved* is a lyrical, brilliant, and unforgettable debut. —*Enobong Tommelleo*

Ordinary Love.

By Marie Rutkoski.

June 2025, 368p. Knopf, \$28 (9780593803264); e-book (9780593803271).

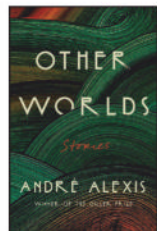
Rutkoski (*Real Easy*, 2022) adds a literary relationship drama to her oeuvre, which includes books for children, young adults, and adults. When Emily's abusive husband Jack pushes their son below the surface of a pool, it is the last straw for their marriage. She moves out immediately, yet she struggles with her search for direction. Before continuing the contemporary story, flashbacks reveal multiple episodes in Emily's past. Emily's relationship with a high-school friend, Gen, looms large in her mind. She loved Gen with an aching passion, but after an epic fight in college, they broke up. She loved Jack too and built her family with him, but he became manipulative and demeaning. On her own in the city, she reconnects with Gen, who is now an Olympic athlete—but Emily's life is much more complicated than it was back in Ohio. Emily's inner battle is the main focus of the novel; she tangles with her bisexual identity, her pull toward Gen, and her obligations to her family. Recommend to fans of complicated, emotional love stories. —*Cari Dubiel*

Other Worlds.

By André Alexis.

May 2025, 288p. Farrar, paper, \$18 (9780374611408).

Author/writer/librettist Alexis, who has won every major Canadian literary prize, presents a stupendously vivid, astonishingly original nine-story collection that spans centuries and moves between his two homes,



Trinidad and Canada. The title of his opening story is a marvel: "Contribution: An Isekai" contains the haunting theme (contrition), plot summary (isekai—"different worlds"), and recognition of global literature (an isekai acknowledges

a Japanese-originating genre in fiction, animation, and games spotlighting a character transported to another world). In Alexis' deft imagination, an almost-septuagenarian Carib Indian buyeis (sorcerer) chooses suicide in 1857 Trinidad (when praise gets mistranslated into threat) and is reborn in 1957 as a seven-year-old Canadian boy through whose body he will learn (enough) of his nineteenth-century fate. Epistolary epiphanies jolt two tales. In "A Certain Likeness," a dead man's letter confirms the parentage of Kisasi, named "revenge" in Swahili by her late mother. In "A Misfortune," a dead mother's letter illuminates a middle-aged

woman's unintentional murder of her father. Other worlds overlap with so-called reality in "Houyhnhnm," starring a talking horse. "Pu Songling: An Appreciation" captures the decades-long bond between two reanimators of the (almost) dead. Each story is a compact revelation about human contradictions, unreliable history, and the stories we tell when understanding is not an option. —*Terry Hong*

The Passengers on the Hankyu Line.

By Hiro Arikawa. Tr. by Allison Markin Powell.

June 2025, 256p. Berkley, \$28 (9798217187188); e-book (9798217187195).

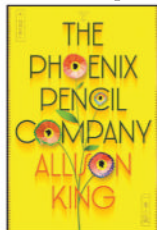
The setup of this gentle, uplifting novel is simple: the Hankyu Line travels between the Japanese cities of Takarazuka and Nishinomiya, and as passengers get on and off the train, readers get a peek into their lives and relationships. The first half of the book introduces the characters, including a young couple embarking on a romance, a spurned woman who has just attended the wedding of her ex, and an abusive boyfriend and his long-suffering girlfriend. In each vignette, the passengers reflect on love, loss, and hope as they contemplate life decisions both major and minor. But the characters aren't traveling in isolation; they eavesdrop and interact with each other in ways that can influence their futures significantly. The second half of the book, set six months later, focuses on the return journey, where readers see how the passengers' lives have changed since that initial trip. Those who enjoy comforting novels about human connection—like Michiko Aoyama's *What You Are Looking for Is in the Library* (2023) or Kim Jiyun's *Yeonnam-dong's Smiley Laundromat* (2025)—will find much to enjoy here. —*Halle Carlson*

The Phoenix Pencil Company.

By Allison King.

June 2025, 368p. Morrow, \$28.99 (9780063446236).

Connections and communication are the crux of writer and software engineer King's remarkable debut novel. Part speculative, part multigenerational family epic, part historical record, part coming-of-age romance, it is, like the mythical titular phoenix, *all* magic. King adroitly intertwines two voices: Swarthmore student Monica Tsai, who's working on EMBRS, a promising "sparking connections" app, and Monica's grandmother, Yun, who is recording her



fading memories in epistolary installments addressed to her cousin Meng, from whom she's been separated for decades. How Monica and Yun preserve their stories reflects vast divides and intimate similarities. Monica (mostly) journals virtually. Yun's memories are accessed via a "Reforged pencil" using an extraordinary power shared by her family's women to conjure what the pencil has previously written. As Yun declines, Monica's yearlong attempt to reunite the estranged cousins becomes possible when

EMBRS links her to Princeton undergrad Louise Sun. Meanwhile, Yun's guilt-tinged longing for Meng only grows, sending her back decades to record Shanghai's history, the Japanese occupation, WWII, the communist takeover, a temporary escape to Taiwan, and eventual U.S. immigration. Monica, still unaware of her powers, will need to learn her family's complex legacy before it's too late. King radiantly explores memory, storytelling, archiving, history, and the subjective unreliability of all that we think we know. —*Terry Hong*

HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: With King as a recipient of a Reese Book Club Litup Fellowship, this imaginative first novel is getting a lot of attention.

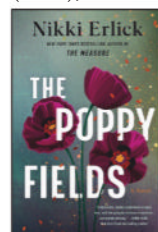
YA: *Teens will appreciate Monica's vulnerable self-discovery, Yun's intriguing memories, and the Reforged pencil's magic.* TH.

The Poppy Fields.

By Nikki Erlick.

June 2025, 320p. Morrow, \$30 (9780063449442); e-book (9780063449353).

It's an accepted truism that grief is universal, but what if one could opt to sleep through the pain? As in her best-selling debut, *The Measure* (2022), Erlick's second novel features characters who have an unusual,



provocative choice: grieving people can go to California's Poppy Fields laboratory, and sleep through one or two months of pain. Created by a brilliant scientist, this innovation is free and purports to move people through the

worst of their sorrow. But not all patients who apply are accepted, and there is a considerable side effect: one quarter of sleepers awake with "emotional moderation," which involves feeling neutral toward the person they lost. Three strangers traveling to Poppy Fields meet in the Kansas City airport, when a tornado delays their flight. Desperate to reach their destination, they opt to share the last rental car and embark on an uneasy road trip. Ray needs to know why his brother died after his sleep; Ava wants to see her estranged sister at the facility; and Sasha's fiancé died just before their wedding. Along the way, they meet free-spirited, 18-year-old Sky, who teaches the trio unique lessons. Erlick's absorbing sophomore work beautifully explores grief, healing, and acceptance. —*Karen Clements*

HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: *The Measure* was a Read with Jenna pick and an instant best-seller, and Erlick's second novel is sure to be another hit.

Romantic Friction.

By Lori Gold.

May 2025, 320p. MIRA, paper, \$18.99 (9780778387657); e-book (9780369763693).

Imitation is not the sincerest form of flattery. At least this is best-selling author Sofie Wilde's opinion when she discovers newbie author Hartley West's debut is a direct knock-

off of Sofie's own best-selling romantasy series. Not only is Hartley branding herself as the next Sofie Wilde, she publicly admits she wrote her book with the help of AI. After Sofie's initial rant against Hartley goes viral, she realizes she is going to have to find a way to minimize the potential damage Hartley and her AI writing campaign could inflict. Because as far as Sofie is concerned, there is only one real Sofie Wilde, and that is she! Not since Elizabeth Peters' *Die for Love* (1984) has there been such a hilarious insider's take on the world of publishing as Sofie and her closest cadre of author friends plot an *Ocean's Eight*-style takedown of her literary nemesis. In between all the laughs, Gold (who writes adult historical and YA fiction as Lori Goldstein) also offers up a serious exploration of the role AI could play in publishing, for better or worse. —*John Charles*

The Sisters.

By Jonas Hassen Khemiri.

June 2025. 656p. Farrar, \$30 (9780374618896); e-book (9780374618902).

The fourth novel from Swedish author and playwright Khemiri (*The Family Clause*, 2020)—his first written in English—imagines a mysterious connection between a narrator named Jonas, who shares the author's biographical details, and the three Mikola sisters, who grew up in his Stockholm neighborhood. Also like Jonas, the driven Ina, outgoing Evelyn, and artistic Anastasia have one Swedish and one Tunisian parent. Abandoned by their father and raised by their unstable Tunisian mother, the sisters grow up believing they're cursed. The novel covers decades, from the characters' childhoods to middle age, switching back and forth between Jonas' and the sisters' experiences. Writing in jaunty, run-on sentences often a page or more in length, Khemiri crafts a spectacularly meandering shaggy dog story, abandoning linear plot to focus on small incidents of daily life as Jonas and the sisters, whose lives only intersect occasionally, fall in and out of love and clatter through the world. Readers willing to go along for the lengthy ride should be delighted by Khemiri's stubborn characters and bouncy prose. —*Margaret Quamme*

The Slip.

By Lucas Schaefer.

June 2025. 496p. Simon & Schuster, \$29.99 (9781668030707).

Sixteen-year-old Nathaniel is spending the summer of 1998 in Austin, making the trip from Boston because his exasperated single mother hopes to curb his violent behavior by having him stay with his uncle. Nathaniel eventually thrives in this environment, volunteering at a senior living facility and gaining a new mentor-cum-father figure at a boxing gym. Then Nathaniel goes missing. Schaefer's stunning

debut expertly weaves nuanced psychological depth into an adrenaline-fueled narrative. Alternate story lines introduce David Dalice, a Haitian immigrant and the activities director at the nursing home, who inspires Nathaniel to find his true self; Sasha, a lonely Russian sex hotline worker looking for a meaningful connection; and single mom Belinda St. James, a former *Playboy* model trying to support her complicated son. Themes of race, class, and identity are portrayed with complex yet nuanced sensitivity. Schaefer brilliantly captures the tumultuous emotional terrain each character must traverse to find themselves. The lyrical prose moves fluidly,

like the smoothest heavyweight champion, shimmering, then delivering a knockout punch. Various plot elements nicely serve the deeper themes of fate, found family, preconceived limitations, weighty expectations, and following one's dreams, all in a rapturous barrage of snappy dialogue, witty rejoinders, and profound observations that make for a wicked combination and a winning bildungsroman. —*Bill Kelly*

YA: Themes of discovering one's identity and sexuality, creating and navigating meaningful relationships, and finding one's tribe will resonate with interested teens. *BK.*

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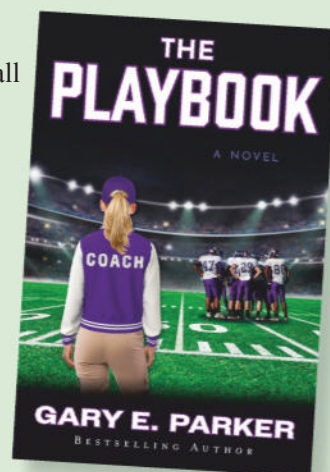
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So Far Gone.

By Jess Walter.

June 2025. 272p. Harper, \$30 (9780062868145).

When Rhys Kinnick's grandchildren appear on his doorstep, he doesn't even recognize them. Seven years ago, after a politically charged argument with his daughter Bethany's husband, Shane, during which Kinnick regrettably sucker-punched "Shithead Shane," Kinnick fled to family land in off-grid Washington state, throwing his phone out the window on the way, and never looked back. Now it appears Bethany has made her own flight and somewhat shockingly directed the children to her estranged father. Shane, meanwhile, is caught up in the militia wing of a radical church. Walter (*The Angel of Rome*, 2022) fills out the story with flashbacks to Kinnick's career in journalism before the industry (and his marriage) fell apart, and to Bethany's youthful efforts not to disappoint her dad, who ultimately disappointed her. Hapless Kinnick struggles to get his bearings, constantly thinking aloud and being told he smells bad, but he knows when to person up. Walter's trademark mix of clever dialogue, diverting tangents, heartrending emotional stakes, and real-feeling characters caught in amped-up human situations will please a broad range of readers. —Annie Bostrom

HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: Readers will be excited to see Walter's first novel since the best-selling and award-winning *The Cold Millions* (2020), especially as it tackles our current political moment.

Songs of No Provenance.

By Lydi Conklin.

June 2025. 368p. Catapult, \$28 (9781646222513).

Conklin's vivid debut novel, following their story collection *Rainbow Rainbow* (2022), portrays a complicated musician at a personal and professional crossroads. Indie veteran Joan Vole is about to perform at a New York City bar when close friend and up-and-coming singer Paige confronts her with discouraging news. Reeling, Joan takes the stage, her set coming to an abrupt end after she performs an impulsive erotic act. Fearing career implosion, Joan flees the city for parts unknown, until she remembers a still-open invitation to teach songwriting at a Virginia camp for teens. With few options, Joan arrives, hoping to lay low. Here, she meets fellow teachers and is drawn to younger instructor Sparrow. As Joan explores her burgeoning connection to Sparrow, her blemished past is revealed, including her tangled relationship with Paige. Meanwhile, the aftereffects of Joan's performance force her to take a serious look at the inner truths of her artistic and sexual motivations as well as the power imbalances in her relationships. Conklin crafts an absorbing exploration of the push-and-pull of the authentic self. —Leah Strauss

Weepers.

By Peter Mendelsund.

June 2025. 320p. Farrar, \$28 (9780374619077); e-book (9780374619084).

After the otherworldly setting of *The Delivery*

(2021), Mendelsund's latest is set in a relatively recognizable world, but one where the narrator, Ed, is part of an unusual group hired to cry at funerals. Ed is haunted by the ghost of his father, drinks a lot, and writes some questionable poetry about his cowboy dreams. In this rural corner of America, Ed and his friends provide a surprisingly necessary service as others struggle to express emotion. On the periphery of this narrative is the (sadly) everyday violence of American life (school shootings make one brief shocking appearance). Ed's life is turned upside down when a nameless, largely voiceless young man, who has a seemingly miraculous and indescribable gift to make people feel things, appears and joins the group. His almost messianic aura entrances Ed and repulses others, and "the kid's" interactions with a brilliant cast of characters drive the story. In this fascinating and hilarious consideration of the repression of grief and feeling in contemporary America, Mendelsund explores faith, mourning, friendship, and death in his singularly evocative style. —Alexander Moran

What We Leave Behind.

By Sue Halpern.

June 2025. 352p. HarperPerennial, paper, \$18.99 (9780063415386).

Melody Marcus is a high-school senior when her adoptive mother, Delia, is killed in a freak accident. Melody has never questioned her place in her family or considered searching for her birth parents, unlike her high-achieving best friend and fellow adoptee, Lily, but she reluctantly agrees to participate in Lily's college genetics research. Not far away, Candace Milton, a successful professional in her 40s, has carefully structured her life to avoid following in the footsteps of her parents and their disastrous marriage. When Candace meets her handsome neighbor—who happens to be a friend of Melody's father—she begins to rethink her single-for-life stance. Both Melody and Candace are fully realized characters whose paths seem destined to intersect. But rather than a hidden connection between them, Melody's DNA test results reveal a different secret that her parents had been keeping from her. Halpern's (*Summer Hours at the Robbers Library*, 2018) well-developed characters and complex family relationships will appeal to fans of contemporary relationship fiction writers like Jodi Picoult or Sue Miller, although they may be disappointed by the lack of cohesion between the novel's parallel narratives. —Lindsay Harmon

YA: YA readers will relate to protagonist Melody and appreciate subplots regarding other teen characters, especially those regarding coming out. *LH.*

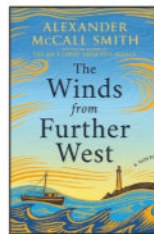
The Winds from Further West.

By Alexander McCall Smith.

July 2025. 256p. Pantheon, \$27 (9780385551410); e-book (9780385551434).

The prodigiously prolific and popular McCall Smith (especially renowned for his long-running No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency series) gives readers a quirky, thought-provok-

ing, thoroughly entertaining stand-alone novel. Quirky because the action mimics Homer's *Odyssey*. Traveler Dr. Neil Anderson is a public health expert who accepts a position at an Edinburgh institution that tracks the worldwide spread of infectious diseases. A misunderstood remark in one of his lectures brings the Furies of an offended student and a corrupt chairperson on Anderson's head, wrecking his career.



His girlfriend betrays him, and he withdraws to the Isle of Mull off the west coast of Scotland to recover. There, battle-scarred from academic infighting, he encounters Circe—a veterinarian given the nickname by locals because her beauty is so powerful that every man who meets her becomes a love-struck fool. McCall Smith, who was a professor of medical law at the University of Edinburgh before launching his writing career, here delivers a credibly scathing attack on academic pettiness and viciousness. Readers will be enchanted by McCall Smith's depiction of the beauty of Mull, and galvanized by his through-theme of the roles chance and choice play in our lives. —Connie Fletcher

The Words of Dr. L and Other Stories.

By Karen E. Bender.

May 2025. 304p. Counterpoint, \$27 (9781640095700).

The concreteness of Bender's language is in sharp contrast to the deep strangeness and troubling ambiguity afoot in the dystopian worlds her characters must navigate. A short-



story writer of disconcerting visions and virtuoso skills, Bender follows *The New Order* (2018) with a speculative collection that aligns the decimation of climate change and tyrannical regimes with the precarity of friendship and the bewilderment and longing of parents and children. The title story dramatizes the emotional consequences of brutal intrusions into women's decisions about pregnancy. In "Separation," a bond evolves between two schoolgirls from families of different social classes as the elite prepare to abandon the dying planet for Mars. In "Globes," a couple are separated from their son when people are abruptly shoved into glass spheres and launched into orbit as deadly plumes rise from the earth. COVID-19 and dementia burden a well-intended family; people's body parts become invisible as they seek justice for aggressions that don't qualify as crimes; a new patient puts a psychiatrist struggling with a mysterious malady and missing his distant son in danger. Bender's finely calibrated prose makes the most bizarre situations feel plausible and the most ordinary predicaments seem uncanny, while her psychological insights into marriage, parenting, guilt, memory, age, and loss are poignantly precise. These are many-faceted, deeply ponderable stories. —Donna Seaman

Historical Fiction

Across the Crying Sands.

By Jane Kirkpatrick.

May 2025. 304p. Revell, paper, \$18.99 (9780800746094); e-book (9781493450657).

Much like the characters from her favorite Jumbies rhymes, Mary Edwards Gerritsee dreams of daring escapades along the Oregon coast, beginning with marriage to her seafaring husband, John. But what Mary hoped would be the start of her next great adventure finds her instead at home with their rapidly growing family, and Mary increasingly discontented with being relegated to domestic duties. As the demands of motherhood push her to the brink of despair and even close to death, she knows the only path forward is one with purpose, faith, and unwavering courage in the face of life's ever-changing tides. Kirkpatrick opens her Women of Cannon Beach series with a powerful 1888 story about the timeless demands on and strength of women at the intersection of ambition and family. Based on the true story of one of the first female mail carriers, the novel features homesteading struggles, Indigenous communities, coastal tourism, and themes of resilience and guilt in motherhood. The ending raises more questions than answers, but this captivating start sparks with the promise of discoveries still to come. —Kate Campos

Blonde Dust.

By Tatiana de Rosnay.

June 2025. 320p. Grand Central, \$29 (9781538770962); e-book (9781538770986).

The chances of one of the newest members of the cleaning staff at Reno's Mapes Hotel being assigned to anything other than basic restroom duty are between zero and none, yet Pauline Hammond gets the break of her young life when she's reassigned to swanky Suite 614 and the care of its erratic and enigmatic resident, Mrs. Miller. Concentrating all her energy on her three-year-old daughter and spending any remaining free time tending to wild horses at her friend's ranch, Pauline is naively unconcerned about the Hollywood crew in town filming an upcoming movie titled *The Misfits*. It takes her a while to realize that the fragile yet charming blonde occupant of Suite 614 is none other than Marilyn Monroe. An unlikely camaraderie blossoms quickly and should be destined to fade just as fast, yet Marilyn recognizes in Pauline a kindred spirit and uses her fame in ways that will alter Pauline's life forever. Historical fiction master de Rosnay (*Flowers of Darkness*, 2021) treats Monroe fans to a seldom-seen side of her tragic life. —Carol Haggas

The Cardinal: A Novel of Love and Power.

By Alison Weir.

June 2025. 464p. Ballantine, \$32 (9780593974704); e-book (9780593974711).

Born an innkeeper's son, Thomas Wolsey rose spectacularly to become a Catholic cardi-

nal and Henry VIII's principal advisor. Weir's (*The Passionate Tudor*, 2024) newest biographical novel departs from royal protagonists to present an intimate, adroitly multifaceted portrait of the man (here called Tom) who devoted many years to serving Henry's interests but whose failure to engineer the annulment of Henry's first marriage caused his disgrace. Reliably meticulous, Weir takes readers through Tom's growing influence, showing how his ambitions led him to the priesthood and how his acumen with foreign policy made him indispensable to Henry while igniting the nobility's resentment. She dexterously interweaves the political and personal, like Tom's love for his mistress, Joan Larke, which he hates keeping secret, and his close, paternal friendship with Henry. Through Weir's controlled storytelling, readers' sympathy for Tom fluctuates throughout; one admires his administrative brilliance while cringing at his astonishing accumulation of riches, which he feels he deserves. Weir plows familiar ground with Henry's split from Katherine of Aragon, but seeing it from Tom's viewpoint provides additional insights. —Sarah Johnson



The Country under Heaven.

By Frederic S. Durbin.

May 2025. 336p. Melville, paper, \$19.99 (9781685891695); e-book (9781685891701).

Ostensibly a western-meets-horror mash-up, *The Country under Heaven* is a testament to the ability of the human soul to survive and

heal in face of both earthly and otherworldly sorrow. Ovid Vesper fought on the front lines for the Union during the Civil War. When a cannonball ripped past Ovid's head at the Battle of Antietam, it also ripped apart a seam in the universe. This ripple in space and time invited a terrible being, the Craither, into the world and gave

Ovid the gift of prescient visions. When the war ends, Ovid travels the American West on his devoted horse. He helps the ghost of a young woman out her killer in Missouri. He escapes from a hell mount hidden deep in the plains of Kansas. He places a corpse at his ancestral place of peace in Montana Territory. The Craither looms ominously, and Ovid longs for peace, love, home. It's unclear until the very end whether Ovid will find it. With an almost Jungian perspective of the collective unconscious, Durbin (*A Green and Ancient Light*, 2016) teaches us that resolution happens deep within all our hearts. Readers of *The Country under Heaven* will be transformed by this book. —Sarah Steers

Days of Light.

By Megan Hunter.

June 2025. 288p. Grove, \$28 (9780802164773); e-book (9780802164780).

In her third novel, Hunter (*The Harpy*, 2020) dives into the life of a British woman



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from a family of artists at the dawn of the twentieth century. Ivy never really feels that she fits in with her creatively gifted family and their brilliant friends. She floats on the periphery of family parties at their lavish countryside estate, set apart from her ethereal and cold mother, intellectual father, and two brothers pulsing with potential. Until tragedy strikes one Easter Sunday, just as Ivy has barely reached young adulthood. The family is permanently changed, and that change becomes a constant through the next decades of Ivy's life. The story is told through snapshots of a half dozen important days in Ivy's life as the century advances. European history and Ivy's own history become entwined in Hunter's haunting world. Readers witness Ivy's marriage (to a much older companion) and motherhood, a surprising affair, and the jagged-mirror terrain of aging. From the vantage point of today, it's fascinating to reexperience one hundred years through Hunter's curious eyes. —*Courtney Eathorne*

The Devil Three Times.

By Rickey Fayne.

May 2025. 416p. Little, Brown, \$30 (978031657171).

The woman, Yetunde, awakens, shackled in the belly of a ship on the “deep, borderless blue” of the Middle Passage, alone and helpless until the elusive “laughing man” appears. Fayne's lively, irreverent debut novel, set in Western Tennessee, follows the fortunes of Yetunde's offspring by her enslaver down six generations of a tangled family tree haunted by ancestral ghosts, steeped in love, and watched over by a cunningly benevolent trickster, the Devil. Among Yetunde's many descendants, light-skinned Asa is raised as the plantation owner's heir. Louis is tricked into fatally wounding his half brother. Young Lucy endlessly sketches the “midnight woman” who appears in the shadows of her bedroom. Fayne beautifully evokes each character's unique voice and essence in dialogue and description—Ms. Lorraine leans on the hood of a car, hair in a beehive, skin the brown of the cigarillo between her lips. Drawing broadly on spiritual traditions, folklore, and history, Fayne dramatically reimagines the origins of centuries of Black history and the quest for freedom in the Devil's unexpected backstory. —*Anne Foley*

The House of Two Sisters.

By Rachel Louise Driscoll.

June 2025. 352p. Ballantine, \$30 (9780593982884); e-book (9780593982891).

Clemmie's father is a well-known Egyptologist in 1887, but her expertise in hieroglyphs has made her indispensable to his business. However, when one night he unwraps mummified, conjoined sisters, Clemmie realizes too late that the amulet they were buried with hearkens back to the story of sisters Isis and Nephthys, and that she may just have allowed a curse to be released. Five years later, she travels from England to Egypt to try to undo the

damage unleashed on her family, hoping to hide her secret from the fellow travelers she's reluctantly fallen in with. Her life and that of her beloved sister Rosetta depend on her success. Chapters weave between her quest in Egypt and flashbacks to how her family started to fall apart after that one fateful night. In Driscoll's debut, a gothic tale of Egyptomania, Clemmie recognizes just how deeply the connection she has with her sister parallels their favorite myth, and she is willing to endure anything to protect Rosetta. She also develops an elevated understanding of the respect due to both uncovered artifacts and the sacred places they inhabit. —*Maribeth Fisher*

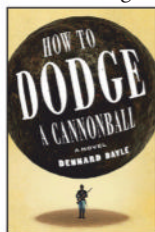


How to Dodge a Cannonball.

By Dennard Dayle.

June 2025. 336p. Holt, \$28.99 (9781250345677); e-book (9781250345660).

Anders is having a rough adolescence, thanks in part to a difficult mother. Then he gets caught up in the Civil War, initially as a Union flag twirler, then as a Confederate,



until his comrade's brutal death at Gettysburg, after which he dons a Union uniform and reinvents himself as a biracial recruit. Deployed with a Negro squad, Anders is taken under the wing of Gleason, a wannabe writer who relies on Anders' literacy, a scarce quality, to help create his imponderable works of “speculative dramaturgy.” Through battles, skirmishes, forced marches, and creakily improvised theater productions, Anders' many talents come to the fore, including his skill at flag twirling, which can have surprisingly lethal results. As the army advances, he will encounter a white-passing teen cross-dresser, a grandiloquent cynic and arms dealer, and two would-be queens, allegedly descendants of the House of Hanover via assorted dalliances with the Founding Fathers. Yet it's his connection to his Black fellow soldiers that most resonates. Initially a caricature of a white clueless liberal, Anders evolves, gradually recognizing the fundamental evil of slavery and the essential hypocrisy of a war in which “Black men are dying to prove they deserve to live.” Dayle's first novel is a sharp satire and rousing picaresque adventure tinged with the melancholy of disillusionment. —*Lesley Williams*

The Stolen Life of Colette Marceau.

By Kristin Harmel.

June 2025. 384p. Gallery, \$28.99 (9781982191733); e-book (9781982191757).

Two stories, one in France before and during WWII and one in Boston 70 years later, are intertwined in this novel of crime, treasure, justice, and love. Colette was a young child when the war began, raised by her mother, Annabel, into a life of thievery—but only for good, never for personal gain. Stories of Robin Hood combined with methods

of stealing jewelry provided the backbone of her upbringing. During the war, she and her mother targeted the Nazis. Then Annabel was arrested and executed, and Colette's younger sister went missing, with a diamond bracelet sewed into the hem of her nightgown. When the bracelet shows up years later in Boston, it may be the key to unraveling a mystery and finding Colette's lost sister. Terrible betrayals happen during the war, and strange coincidences and unlikely occurrences in Boston may have the power to undo decades-old damage. This very romantic story will provide a happy ending for those who need it. A good fit for public-library historical-fiction collections. —*Danise Hoover*

Ten Incarnations of Rebellion.

By Vaishnavi Patel.

June 2025. 320p. Ballantine, \$29 (9780593874769); e-book (9780593874776).

Kalki Divekar grows up in 1960s Kingston in an alternate history where Great Britain effectively squashed early independence movements, repressed the many cultures and languages of India, and established a tightly wound colonial society dependent on military might and surveillance. Her father was taken away years ago for being a rebel, and now Kalki has the urge to follow in his footsteps. She and her two best friends are soon swept up in a system of resistance that will challenge their morals, their strength, and their trust in one another. Patel (*Goddess of the River*, 2024) gives readers a powerful, compelling alt history that not only explores Great Britain's colonialist violence and draws on Indian myth and religious tales but also presents challenging questions about what sacrifices it takes to build a truly effective revolutionary movement. While the writing could be tighter, Patel's novel is propelled by its characters, the female leaders of a rebellion that will take out an entire oppressive regime, and their debates, support for one another, and determination to see an independent India. —*Leah von Essen*

That Which Binds Us.

By Cathy Rigg.

June 2025. 320p. Turner/Keylight, \$31.99 (9781684429936); e-book (9781684429950).

Taking the adage “write what you know” to heart, Rigg looks to her ancestral roots to spin this poignant family saga narrated by five distinct voices. In 1854, 13-year-old Elizabeth Young defiantly visits her uncle, Ruck, before he hangs for murder. Bothered by a family rift, she vows to escape her rural Virginia home and all its secrets. She's influenced by her teacher Marilee, who brings her Charlottesville education to benefit the “less fortunate” Appalachian children. Both are drawn to Patrick Hagan, a charming lawyer recently arrived from Ireland, who relishes the local people, including Red Hopkins, who knows everyone's secrets. Six years later, Elizabeth falls in love with musician Ben, settling

down as the Civil War looms and then ravages the community. Like her people, Elizabeth finds a second chance after facing devastating loss. Rigg's moving debut, a paean to the indomitable spirit of Virginia's Appalachian people and the beautiful geography they inhabit, should be savored. Fans of Southern literature and historical fiction will welcome this new voice. —*Karen Clements*

When Sleeping Women Wake.

By Emma Pei Yin.

June 2025. 336p. Ballantine, \$30 (9780593975565); e-book (9780593975572).

China's illustrious Tang family has been torn apart, leaving behind only a mother, her daughter, and their maid. After fleeing Japan's invasion of Shanghai, they are caught in the crosshairs of those same forces in British-occupied Hong Kong in 1941. Now the family's lone survivors, who have been separated, must find their way back to one other. Before the attack, Madame Tang had come to terms with her failure to bear a son, accepting her husband's ire and his meddling concubine. Then her daughter's new English teacher sparks a tantalizing romance. But their clandestine meetings come to a halt when Madame Tang is taken by the Japanese forces as a translator. Meanwhile, her headstrong daughter, Tang Qiang, and their maid, Biyu, eventually join the Resistance under a charming young lieutenant. Each woman is caught up in her own fight for freedom, with a shared desire: a long-awaited reunion, complete with a warm embrace. Heart-wrenching yet hopeful, this evocative debut seamlessly interweaves Mandarin, Cantonese, and Japanese language throughout. A must-read for fans of female-driven historical fiction. —*Allison Cho*

Romance

Along Came Amor.

By Alexis Daria.

May 2025. 512p. Avon, paper, \$18.99 (9780062960009).

A secret relationship with a millionaire, an elaborate family wedding, and more feature in the third and final novel of the Primas of Power trilogy (*You Had Me at Hola*, 2020, and *A Lot like Adiós*, 2021). Teacher Ava wants to move on from her divorce, but her family can't stop talking about it. So she decides to do something different and spends a fun romantic night, starting in a sexy rooftop pool, with a hotelier she met at a bar. Ava thinks that was her one adventure, and plans to move on. But then she texts him again. Not realizing how much family pressure she's under, hotel chain owner Roman, who lives with his mom and sister, responds whenever Ava texts him, hoping to romance her and convince her into a real relationship. And then they realize they're going to be Best Man and Maid of Honor at their mutual friends' wedding. Ava and Roman have plenty of chemistry. The details of exotic get-

aways and luxury hotels offer a fun backdrop to a winning romance. —*Amy Alessio*

Battle of the Bookstores.

By Ali Brady.

June 2025. 448p. Berkley, paper, \$19 (9780593640845); e-book (9780593640852).

Even though they both own bookstores on the same street in Boston, up until now, Josie Klein, owner of Tabula Inscripta, has never interacted with Ryan Lawson, who owns Happy Endings. Then Xander Laing, their mutual landlord, decides to renovate the block and combine everything into one space. So, as far as Xander is concerned, he will need only one bookstore going forward, so he declares that whichever store makes the most in profits during the renovation period will get to stay. May the best bookseller win! Cleverly riffing on *You've Got Mail* and *The Little Shop around the Corner*, Brady, the pseudonym for Alison Hammer and Bradleigh Godfrey (*The Comeback Summer*, 2023), fashions another fun, flirty, and fiercely romantic love story about a literary-fiction reader and a romance devotee falling in love. This also serves as a beautifully written paean to the magic of bookstores, the power of romance novels, and the joy of reading. In addition to all the witty banter and sexy chemistry between the protagonists, readers will be struck by thoughtful insights about dyslexia and family relationships as well as spot-on observations about the art and craft of bookselling. —*John Charles*

Can't Get Enough.

By Kennedy Ryan.

May 2025. 448p. Forever, \$17.99 (9781538706855); e-book (9781538706879).

At a Miami white party, Hendrix Barry meets newly minted Black billionaire Maverick Bell, but he's in a relationship with Hendrix's potential producing partner, so he's off-limits no matter how their attraction crackles. Except Mav is more available than he seems, and once the dust settles, he pursues Hendrix with laser focus. But Hendrix's busy life is made even more complicated by her mother's Alzheimer's diagnosis, and Hendrix is spending time in small-town North Carolina helping to care for her. She's never been able to trust a man to accept her child-free-by-choice status and her big-time ambitions, but Mav may be the exception. Then her fund for Black businesswomen is threatened by a discrimination lawsuit that has unexpected ties to Mav. Ryan's third Skyland romance (after *This Could Be Us*, 2024) finally gives Hendrix her HEA. It's hard won, which makes it all that much sweeter. And

it's steamy, as befits the sex-positive, confident heroine. The way Hendrix talks to her friends is frank and hilarious, and Ryan deftly mixes that lightness with serious issues. All that plus a funny secondary romance and an exuberant epilogue add up to a perfect contemporary romance. —*Susan Maguire*

HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: Readers can't get enough of Ryan's sizzling, emotionally searing romances, and they have been waiting for Hendrix's story since *Before I Let Go* (2022).

Capture the Moment.

By Suzanne Woods Fisher.

May 2025. 320p. Revell, paper, \$18.99 (9780800745318); e-book (9781493450572).

Photographer Kate Cunningham knows that a shot of Grand Teton's famous yet elusive Grizzly Bear 399 could finally be her big break. But the last thing park ranger Grant Cooper (known as Coop) needs is another infernal shutterbug getting themselves—or worse, the wildlife—into trouble. Kate soon realizes spotting 399 in the park is competitive, and rumors of someone hunting for a shot deadlier than film have staff and visitors on edge. When Coop agrees to help Kate capture her moment, the pair discovers that whether in life or love, even the best-laid plans must adapt in the wild. Woods Fisher delivers a majestic start to her exciting new National Park Summers series. Set against the breathtaking wilderness of Grand Teton National Park, *Capture the Moment* is a riveting modern-day novel that masterfully weaves together Christian faith, sweet romance, and gripping suspense. From Teton Range to Jenny Lake, the splendor of the wilderness beautifully contrasts with the complex themes of forgiveness and trust; family and second chances; and national park patronage and politics. —*Kate Campos*

Cruel Summer.

By Maisie Yates.

June 2025. 320p. Canary Street, \$18.99 (9781335471451); e-book (9780369751416).

Just when Samantha Parker thinks she and husband Will are finally heading into happy, romantic empty-nest adventures, her husband tells her he wants an open marriage. They had married when she became pregnant in high school, and stayed together to raise a family with three children. And now she has to come to terms with a possible end to their marriage. She agrees to spend the summer apart. While he goes on his own adventures (and she's sure that he'll come back to her afterwards), she will find herself. She agrees to help his best friend, Logan, deliver his classic cars cross-country throughout the summer. But Logan forces Sam to look at her choices and at the cracks in her life that she has been ignoring: she begins to wonder what her life could look like if she put herself first. This emotional story is primarily about dealing with expectations and moving through grief, but the

romance between Sam and Logan is both steamy and satisfying. —*Amy Alessio*

★ **Dream On, Ramona Riley.**
By Ashley Herring Blake.

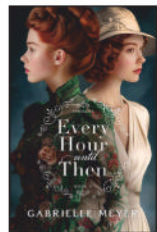
May 2025. 416p. Berkley, paper, \$19 (9780593815991); e-book (9780593816004).

Ramona Riley has never fully given up her dream of becoming a Hollywood costume designer, even after she dropped out of fashion school at 18 to help care for her younger sister following a family tragedy. When actress Dylan Monroe shows up to make a movie in Ramona's little New Hampshire tourist town, Ramona doesn't dare hope her dreams might come true. Dylan carries scars from a chaotic childhood, raised by two drug-addicted mega rock stars. When Ramona and Dylan keep finding themselves thrown together, sparks fly, and they don't want to be apart. But what Ramona knows and Dylan doesn't realize is that the two met one summer when they were kids and shared each other's first kiss. Complicating real feelings with the messy surreality of Hollywood, this book sets up the misunderstandings and obstacles to Ramona and Dylan's relationship only to expertly knock them down. The book is steamy while also being a sweet and sensitive look at the complex feelings of the characters, exploring how difficult it can be to trust others when you don't trust yourself. It's a fantastic start to Herring Blake's (*Iris Kelly Doesn't Date*, 2023) Clover Lake queer-romcom series. —*Pamela Gardner*

★ **Every Hour until Then.**
By Gabrielle Meyer.

May 2025. 368p. Bethany House, paper, \$18.99 (9780764243011); e-book (9781493448128).

Time-crossing museum curator Kathryn is ready to embrace the freedoms of 1938 and leave behind the constraints of Victorian England. But her work at the London Museum's Jack the Ripper exhibit reveals a terrifying truth: her 1888 time line intersects dangerously closely with the gruesome murders, and evidence reveals the possibility of a powerful society that is ruthlessly protecting its deadly secrets. Kathryn is determined to use her time-crossing gift to save the people she loves, but doing so will mean endangering the course of history, and risk losing the man who vowed to guard her secret—and her heart—forever. Meyer (*Across the Ages*, 2024) brilliantly blends her sparkling creativity with cinematic-grade historical drama and suspense once again in her fifth Timeless book. The novel's Jack the Ripper plot feature is steeped in foreboding, while the tension between God's sovereignty and free will lies at its thematic heart. From opulent palaces to depths of poverty, the rich



historical details are immersive and meticulously crafted, where figures like the Astors and Lindberghs appear alongside the looming threat of war in London. Kathryn's desperation is palpable, and her emotional awakening to a life beyond what she planned unfolds as both triumphantly romantic and tenderly earned. —*Kate Campos*

★ **It Takes a Psychic.**
By Jayne Castle.

June 2025. 320p. Berkley, \$30 (9780593639948); e-book (9780593639962).

Leona Griffin, a para-archaeologist with a talent for picking locks, does not believe in coincidences. So when she's hired to authenticate a relic known as Pandora's Box and discovers it contains something Leona thought only she and her sister Molly possessed, Leona knows it could be a key to unlocking the Griffin family secret. It makes perfect sense to Leona to work together with Oliver Rancourt, a museum director who also happens to be interested in Pandora's Box. But as far as she's concerned, once their new partnership stops being mutually beneficial, it is every woman or man for him or herself. The many ardent admirers of Castle (aka Jayne Ann Krentz) and her ingeniously inventive, paranormal-infused world of Harmony will be delighted that her new addition to the series, the eleventh, is another supremely satisfying blend of sharply etched characters, suspenseful plotting, and smartly crafted dialogue. Add an adorable dust bunny named Roxy to the mix, and you have everything fans of supernatural romance tales could wish for and more. —*John Charles*

Kiss Me, Maybe.
By Gabriella Gamez.

May 2025. 384p. Forever, paper, \$17.99 (9781538726655); e-book (9781538726662).

After a post of her lip-syncing in her pajamas goes viral, Angela Gutierrez starts getting a lot of attention, much of it of a romantic nature. However, while now plenty of people seem to be ready to date her, up until now Angela has never even been kissed. But what if she uses her internet moment to finally secure that experience? To make that happen, Angela, working with Krystal Ramirez, the cute and flirty bartender at her favorite watering spot, comes up with the idea of a scavenger hunt around San Antonio with the winner getting the chance to give Angela her first kiss. Everything is all fun and games until Angela realizes she might actually be falling for Krystal, who has sworn off love forever. With her second swoon-worthy addition to her Librarians in Love series, Gamez (*The Next Best Fling*, 2024) offers readers a romance replete with emotional heart and some well-timed sensual heat that also offers a refreshingly honest discussion about the spectrum of human sexuality. —*John Charles*

Last Night Was Fun.
By Holly Michelle.

June 2025. 368p. Avon, paper, \$18.99 (9780063420366); e-book (9780063420373).

"Sorry, wrong number," Emmy Jameson replies when she receives a text that says, "Last night was fun." However, after informing the gentleman on the other end of the text that he has been fake-numbered by his date, Emmy finds herself charmed by her texter, who is so completely different than all the other men in Emmy's life, especially her annoying work nemesis, Gabe Olson. As Emmy and her new digital friend continue their flirtatious digital conversation, it eventually prompts Emmy, who is desperately seeking a date for her sister's upcoming wedding, to ask her mystery texter if he would consider being her plus-one. However, when Emmy finally meets her new date in person, she is in for an even bigger surprise. He is someone Emmy already knows and loathes! The wit-infused texting between the book's protagonists gives this sparkling romance an almost epistolary flavor, while the snappy dialogue and irresistibly adorable chemistry Michelle creates between her protagonists proves she has successfully solved the equation for a fabulously fun rom-com. —*John Charles*

A Lesson in Propriety.
By Jen Turano.

May 2025. 352p. Bethany House, paper, \$18.99 (9780764243851); e-book (9781493450923).

Miss Drusilla Merriweather is renowned for her steely adherence to propriety, save for a single breach of etiquette: she is and always will be mistress of her own fate. After being spurned by suitors and the social elite, Drusilla is determined to rebuild her family's life in a decrepit Chicago castle without help, least of all from Rhenick Whittenbacker's impulsive marriage proposal. When a missing aunt, whispers of hidden treasure, and Chicago's threatening underworld complicate Drusilla's fresh start, Rhenick knows he must intervene. But convincing Drusilla will prove to be a lesson—and she a woman—he will not soon forget. *A Lesson in Propriety* opens Turano's new Merriweather Academy for Young Ladies series. It is a rousing historical inspirational romance about finding the proper balance between independence and the support of those who truly believe in you. Turano is a riot when it comes to putting her eclectic characters in the most bizarre circumstances. The novel's primarily first-person narrative adds a layer of comedic irony to the evocative theme of women's empowerment through education. —*Kate Campos*

Look before You Leap.
By Virginia Heath.

June 2025. 320p. St. Martin's/Griffin, paper, \$19 (9781250896094); e-book (9781250896100).

Charlotte "Lottie" Travers knows she is better at being a governess than a lady's com-

Continued on p.40



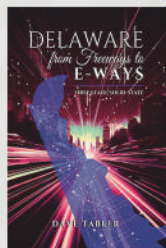
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ISBN: 9798398839951
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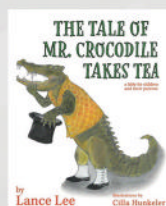
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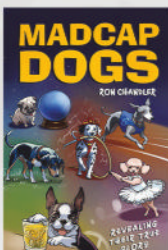
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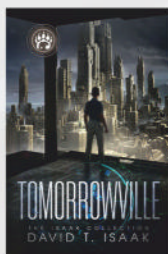
The Tale of Mr. Crocodile Takes Tea
Lance Lee
illustrator Cilla Hunkeler
LWL Books
lanceleeeauthor.com
ISBN: 9798218306144
A comic fable on race relations as Mr. Crocodile decides people are Persons too!



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Lori Keeseey
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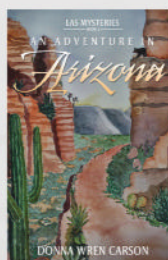
Tomorrowville
David T. Isaak
Utamatzi Inc.
utamatzi.com
ISBN: 978-1-958840-02-3
Toby Simmons dies in 2088—and wakes up in 2088. 2088 wasn't ready for Toby.



The One Week Writing Workshop
Karin Adams
Indigo Rose
karinadams.com
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Never Home: Remembering the Military Heroes Who Never Returned
Richard Sherman
Independent
NeverHomeHeroes.com/index
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Honoring the fallen with photos & bios from our 23 overseas WWI & WWII cemeteries.



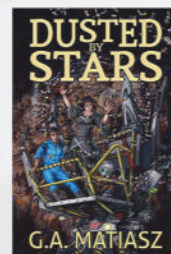
An Adventure in Arizona
Donna Wren Carson
Bookside Press
donna-wren-carson.com
ISBN: 978-1-77883-478-3
Leira & friends explore Indian lore and animals in AZ until the trip turns deadly.



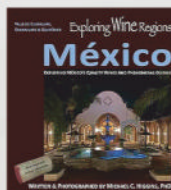
Born in Space: Unlocking Destiny
Jeremy Clift
ElleWon Press
jeremycliftbooks.com
ISBN: 9798990010734
Can Teagan reunite with 7 spacelab babies? The cosmic custody fight of a lifetime!



Season of the Dragon: Dragos Primeri I
Natalie Wright
Menaris Books
NatalieWrightAuthor.com
ISBN: 9798987491218
Quen hunts a dragon but soon discovers *she's* the hunted. Romantic High Fantasy.



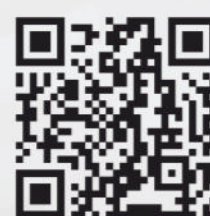
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G. A. Matiasz
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gamatiasz.com
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Science fiction space opera with a touch of fantasy. Action-adventure thriller.



Exploring Wine Regions: Mexico
Michael C. Higgins, PhD
International Exploration Society
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In fourth book on wine regions, "Higgins again dazzles his audience..." — *BlueInk Starred Review*



Holding the Fort: The Fatal Error
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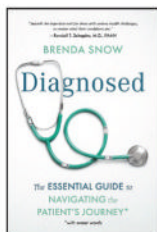
Adult

★ **Diagnosed: The Essential Guide to Navigating the Patient's Journey.**

By Brenda Snow.

2025. 226p. Amplify, \$28 (9798891381957). 616.

After 30 years dealing with multiple sclerosis (MS) and decades as an entrepreneur and speaker focusing on patients with chronic or terminal illnesses, Snow offers this heartfelt



road map for patients and caregivers. The author shares her challenging journey, relating how medications triggered anaphylactic shock and a heart attack, engulfing her in self-pity and anger. Finally, she chose to refocus her negative thoughts and search for the right medications and therapy. She then successfully created a patient engagement healthcare company to help others. The author helpfully describes the psychological stages of a serious illness and suggests ways to avoid negativity—such as reframing thoughts about “how strange you may look in public” and remembering those who love you—and provides various patient perspectives. Snow also encourages caregivers as they help patients cope. Readers facing illness will find gems of wisdom here. They might also relate as she recalls negative or patronizing comments from others and suggests how to deal with them. The book is easy to read and filled with valuable information for those in such challenging situations.

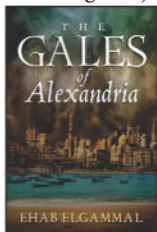
★ **The Gales of Alexandria.**

By Ehab Elgammal.

2025. 352p. Escape Editions, e-book, \$8.99 (9781069167408).

In this compelling suspense story, a nuclear terrorist threat looms as the CIA scrambles to discern a target and time. As the novel

begins, history professor Omar El-Mohammedi struggles to make himself read his dead son Nasser's journal. It's the only viable clue the CIA has to the threat, as the journal, which seems coded, was found in the hideout of a suspected terrorist group to which Nasser belonged. The only one capable of decoding the journal is Omar, who is sorely



grieving his loss. As Omar relents and delves deep into the journal, he must also confront his memories and the past. Likewise, Nasser's family and friends grieve while trying to understand why he became pivotal in an attack that would rival 9/11 on the global stage. Ultimately, the book is a fascinating character study of Nasser, a man broken by loss and influenced by faith. Whether he's a terrorist or a hero is intriguingly hidden in the lyrical musings of his journal.

March of the Mystics.

By David Schweitzer.

2024. 324p. AuthorHouse, paper, \$21.99 (9798823027120).

This comedic fantasy commences with middle-aged treasure-hunter Gala Goda planning to infiltrate an ancient temple to acquire a valuable artifact. Before completing this ill-conceived raid, Gala encounters a group of mystics who appear out of nowhere and have limited memory of their past lives. After convincing them to assist with his heist, Gala agrees to accompany the mystics on their journey to locate a hidden castle, where they hope the king-in-residence will help avert a catastrophic conflict brewing across the land. Set in a charmingly hodgepodge world, the narrative successfully blends heroic quest-styled fantasy tropes (enchanted forests, mythical creatures, etc.) with contemporary elements, like the technologically advanced

city of Civis. Although it explores several themes—such as self-discovery, courage under fire, teamwork, and more—the book truly excels in its satirical skewering of two opposing world leaders: one being a warmongering tyrant, the other a narcissist more concerned with safeguarding his holiday home than defending his subjects. These leaders provide a silly antagonistic force for the heroes as they seek their goal of world peace. Genre fiction fans seeking a quick-witted narrative will enjoy this breezy fantasy.

People Do Change: How to Turn Reluctance into Confidence Using Human-Centric Change Management.

By Elisabeth White.

2025. 192p. Amplify, \$24.95 (9798891385191). 658.4.

White, an Agile consultant and the founder of Cornerstone Agility, focuses on the history of change-management thinking, aiming to help leaders foment change in a thoughtful, human-centered way. “While the business world has accelerated,” White writes, “human nature hasn't quite caught up.” How can leaders help workforces cope with, and even excel, during periods of fast change? In the past, White notes, organizational change thought-leadership was more rigid and didn't “account for the constant state of flux that defines modern business.” She cites leaders such as Kurt Lewin, whose 1950s-era Unfreeze-Change-Refreeze model now looks painfully slow. In the '60s, Elisabeth Kübler-Ross' delineation of the stages of grief began to be used to address workplace changes, and in the '90s, John Kotter's Eight-Step Process for Leading Change incorporated the psychology of change to show how leaders can support and inspire staff. White illustrates each approach with examples of companies that have attempted them. She also suggests ways to use authentic human interactions and kindness to help employees manage change. Those unfam-

miliar with such ideas will find this to be an intriguing and edifying read.

★ **The Potentialist: The Pursuit of Wisdom.**

By Ben Lytle.

2024. 312p. Amplify, \$28 (9781637557198). 153.

As the founding CEO of the health provider Anthem, Lytle offers advice for nurturing the “unique conscious ‘you,’ your destiny and reason for living.” The author sees a near future of lightning-fast change and greater complexity, in which humans will live, work, vote, and spend longer than ever. According to Lytle, “The best preparation is adaptability and being well grounded, calm, and fearless. Those qualities define every wise person I know.” In this follow-up to his first Potentialist book, *The Potentialist: Your Future in the New Reality of the Next Thirty Years* (2022), Lytle explains how to gain wisdom now, not just over years of experience, by acknowledging natural laws (e.g., the law of cause and effect), pondering unavoidable questions (“How does one identify and follow a meaningful passion?”), and understanding body psychology (Ego, Shadow, Soul, Conscious). “Your potential is your best self that I call the ‘I’ in ‘Me’ or ‘INME,’” he writes. “It resides just below the surface of your conscious awareness, develops over a lifetime, and its growth can be accelerated.” Informative, relatable, and uplifting, this book exudes the love, encouragement, and wisdom of a beloved elder who has earned respect. It rewards careful, repeated study.

Silver Echoes: A Gold Digger Novel.

By Rebecca Rosenberg.

2025. 370p. Lion Heart, paper, \$15.99 (9781732969964).

Following the success of *Gold Digger* (2019), Rosenberg delivers a sparkling and fiercely tragic biofic of Baby Doe Tabor and her daughter, the dazzling Silver Dollar Tabor. In 1932, Baby Doe is trying desperately to save her husband’s failing silver mine in Leadville, Colorado, while working with a friend of Silver’s to write a movie about the Tabors’ lives. Flashback chapters reveal all that Baby Doe doesn’t know about her daughter’s difficult life. In 1919, “twentysomething Silver, aiming to become a performer, leaves Denver for the Midwest, landing in Chicago. She tries various acts, but brief moments of success are undercut by a downward spiral of pain and loss. Rosenberg’s images leap off the page, especially when describing Silver’s more flamboyant acts, like tiger taming. To the familiar-feeling gangster underworld of Prohibition-era Chicago, Rosenberg adds temperance and white supremacist movements for extra conflict. Scenes whirl along to dizzying effect, sometimes without solid character development or dramatic arcs. But if the narrative’s hectic pacing is occasionally

disorienting, it’s also thrilling, and readers will hang on to see how the story unfolds.

The Waiting Dead.

By Bill VanPatten.

2025. 236p. Bill VanPatten, paper, \$11.99 (9798303286269).

VanPatten’s engaging novel is a contemporary ghost story about two dead characters, 50-year-old Guy and 12-year-old Torrance, called back to Earth from the afterlife. When Guy finds himself suddenly naked in a Chicago park, he knows only that an ex-partner from his past has called on him for help, and Guy must assist him if he can. He acquires clothing, enjoys his first meal in decades, and meets Torrance, a boy on a similar quest. The two strike up a tentative friendship, agreeing to navigate their return together. Guy and Torrance’s adventures move quickly, enhanced by sharp dialogue and their creative ways of managing modern life without credit cards or IDs. Guy is unsure how much to share about his past life with Torrance, and it’s plain to him that Torrance’s personal history is painful and his death most likely violent. The novel has some dark themes, but it’s heartfelt and humorous overall. The developing father-son relationship between Guy and Torrance unfolds simply, and readers will root for them as they confront their pasts and seek a future that benefits both.

Youth

★ **MoHagani vs. King Salmon.**

By M.C. MoHagani Magnetek. Illus. by Janine Carrington.

2025. 18p. Edutainment Nite, paper, \$12 (9798990369245).

This unique comic book–style picture book pits a human and a fish in an over-the-top battle to the death to demonstrate the power of words. Alaska-based writer and anthropologist Magnetek sets up protagonist MoHagani as an unreliable narrator from the start: she admits she’s decided to “tell a lie about how I became King Salmon.” What unfolds is a series of “yo” mama” jokes, made by her adversary, King Salmon, who calls MoHagani on the phone to taunt her, saying, “Yo” Mama is soooo old she looks at her watch every time she hears Tik Tok.” After he continues his jokes, ignoring her warnings to stop, MoHagani dives off the Douglas Bridge, then swims “142 miles to meet King Salmon.” An epic tussle ensues, with punches, tail whipping, smacks, beat downs, and reversals of fortune. Although MoHagani eventually emerges victorious, her win leads to an unforeseen outcome. Carrington’s vibrant illustrations pulse with energy and spirited conflict, and the book design immerses readers in colorful Alaskan land- and oceanscapes. This cultural celebration of Alaska Native storytelling and



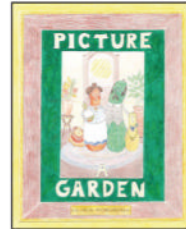
African American folktales is a multigenerational winner.

★ **Picture a Garden.**

By Linda Hornberg.

2025. 160p. Peanut Butter, paper, \$24.95 (9781598493603). 635.

Written, illustrated, and hand-lettered by Hornberg, this thoroughly delightful young person’s guide to plants and gardens touches on just about everything garden-related, from the source of rutabagas to the many ways humans use plants (including for perfume and medicine), to what happens when you pick a bud off a tree. Hornberg digs into scientific and common plant names, discusses plant lore, outlines useful garden tools, and examines garden design. She also covers the basics: how to dig a hole, plant, water, prune, control pests, and care for and harvest plants. Hornberg shows a deep understanding of her young audience, from the delightful illustrations (fruits with faces and cute cartoons) to fun puns (“Don’t panic, said the wise old peduncle”) and personal notes (“A seedling sprouted in my yard and refused to leave, so I bent it over in half and it kept growing as a weeping tree”). Each topic occupies either a single page or two facing pages. Readers will savor every morsel of information delivered so painlessly and with great humor in a book that’s a joy from cover to cover.



Up So Floating.

By Maureen Hourihan.

2024. 184p. Archway, paper, \$16.99 (9781665760195).

In 1964 at Springfield, Massachusetts’ All Saints School, smart-mouthed sixth-grader Montura (Monty) Moriarty bristles when Sister Portentia tells the class to form teams to perform in a talent show. Claiming she has no talent, Monty rebels until Sister Portentia says, “Listen up, missy. You’re failing this term . . . Get with the program.” Monty knows this is true, but she has ongoing spells of a “sensation of rising and floating” that began a year ago, when her mother died suddenly. She gets on board with the talent show when she discovers that “an abundance of grace” may befall the winners, hoping this grace will ground her and restore joy. As she grows closer with teammate Sandra, who suffers from a chronic illness, Sandra’s condition triggers memories of Monty’s mother’s failing health before her death. Monty’s colorful relatives, historical tidbits on Massachusetts writers like Emily Dickinson, and pop-culture events (e.g., the Beatles on *The Ed Sullivan* show) flesh out the period, while Tim Graham’s delicate illustrations add a winsome, graceful note. Given its ’60s setting, this could be a grandparent-grandchild “book club” read.

Continued from p.36

panion, but given her recent scandal-tinged employment record, Lady Almeria Winthrop is the only person interested in hiring her. Lottie is fully prepared to paste a smile on her face as she accompanies her crotchety new employer on a trip to Scotland, when everything changes. Instead of Scotland, Lady Almeria is traveling to Kent, where she is helping plan a secret birthday celebration-matchmaking party for her nephew, Guy Harrowby. Holding on to her new job could now be a problem for Lottie, however, because she has already met Guy. Several weeks earlier, she read him the riot act after he collided with her on the riding path at Hyde Park. With the second sparkling addition to her Miss Prentice's Protegees series (after *All's Fair in Love and War*, 2024), Heath puts her own wit-infused Regency spin on the grumpy-sunshine trope with a particularly delightful pair of protagonists who trade plenty of sharp quips and a few steamy kisses while bonding over their shared love of horses and riding. —*John Charles*

The Love Haters.

By Katherine Center.

May 2025. 320p. St. Martin's, \$29 (9781250283825); e-book (9781250283832).

Center follows *The Rom-Commers* (2024) with another tale of forced workplace proximity that leads to love. Video producer Katie is worried about losing her job when her new boss starts making staffing cuts, so when her coworker Cole comes to her with an assignment that involves filming a segment about his heroic brother, Hutch, she reluctantly agrees. Hutch is a Coast Guard rescue swimmer who found himself in the spotlight after saving Jennifer Aniston's beloved dog, and while he's the perfect subject, he is by no means an enthusiastic one. Katie, who can't swim and struggles with body dysmorphia issues, dreads both being in a bathing suit and being in the water, especially once she sees how gorgeous Hutch is. For his part, the aloof Hutch warms to her pretty quickly, until the issues between him and his brother threaten his growing feelings for Katie. Center's latest is a charming romp full of all the elements readers have come to expect from her: endearingly guarded characters thrust into a situation that opens up their worlds in the best way. —*Kristine Huntley*

YA: Center's PG-13 love stories with their quirky characters and fast-paced plots are the perfect introduction to adult rom-coms for teens. KH.

Never Been Shipped.

By Alicia Thompson.

June 2025. 400p. Berkley, paper, \$19 (9780593640951); e-book (9780593640968).

Guitarist John thought he had left his former hit band far behind. So when the offer came in for the band to reunite on a special cruise, he was surprised to learn that his former best friend and lead singer of the band, Micah,

had agreed to it. Now thrust back into dealing with his unrequited love for Micah, John struggles with the anger he still feels about what happened between them all those years ago. Meanwhile, Micah is also experiencing her own feelings on seeing John again—feelings that she's realizing are more than friendship. When the two find themselves very easily slipping back into old habits, Micah worries John can't forgive her for what she did back then. Filled with witty dialogue and sizzling chemistry, Thompson's characters spark on the page as they attempt to mend what was once broken. Fans of rockstar romances and friends-to-lovers dynamics will adore experiencing John and Micah finding each other once again, as well as the very realistic dive into the culture of music. —*Lindsey Allen*



One Golden Summer.

By Carley Fortune.

May 2025. 400p. Berkley, paper, \$19 (9780593638910); e-book (9780593638934).

Fortune returns to Barry's Bay (site of *Every Summer After*, 2022), and although some familiar faces appear (like Percy, Sam, and Charlie), the novel stands on its own with the story of photographer Alice. Alice takes on every assignment she can, hoping to fill up every second of her day in an attempt to forget that her long-term boyfriend has left and is now engaged to someone else. When her beloved grandmother, Nan, falls and needs someone to care for her, it forces Alice to take a break. She decides to take her Nan back to Barry's Bay for the summer. There, she hopes Nan will recuperate and that Alice herself will find her way back to why she loves photography. What Alice doesn't expect is to fall for Charlie Florek, a local man whom she photographed when they were both teenagers—a photo that changed her life forever. Readers will enjoy the steamy love story that develops but will also appreciate Alice's personal growth. Not only does she find love, she finds her purpose in her career. Fans of Annabel Monaghan will agree with Nan that “good things happen at the lake.” —*Crystal Vela*

The Pursuit of Elena Bradford.

By Ann H. Gabhart.

May 2025. 352p. Revell, paper, \$18.99 (9780800746261); e-book (9781493450589).

Graham Springs in 1842 is a premier summer destination promising restorative powers in its natural pools. But Elena Bradford seriously doubts the Kentucky waters can solve the threat of financial ruin facing her family after her father's death. As her conspiring mother strategizes to find Elena an advantageous marriage among the affluent vacationers, Elena's list of suitors quickly complicates her once-pragmatic approach to their predicament. An elderly general, an opportunistic artist, and a lovelorn gentleman stand ready to woo Elena,

but the duty to her family that once guided her now conflicts with the unexpected desires of her heart. Gabhart delights in her latest historical inspiring romance about discovering a love that lets life bloom. Set against the backdrop of a lovely antebellum resort rich with gardens, evening dances, and artistic painting, the novel's depiction of leisure sharply contrasts with the complexities of sacrificial love and self-worth. Its love triangle is sure to entertain, while its thread of secrets held by the charismatic guests add intrigue and mystery to this exceptional novel. —*Kate Campos*

Ready to Score.

By Jodie Slaughter.

June 2025. 320p. St. Martin's/Griffin, paper, \$18 (9781250821867); e-book (9781250821874).

This fabulous football romance features two female teachers who want to be the next football head coach at a southern high school and discover that they might also want to be romantic partners. Jade has an official assistant coach position but is hoping to become head coach when the man fulfilling that role, her mentor, retires the following year. Everyone knows she is his choice to replace him: Jade has been grinding for the spot for years. But art teacher Francesca wants to be a coach too. Her direct approach grates on Jade's nerves, but soon Francesca becomes a fixture at the coaches' poker games and at practices. She knows the friction between her and Jade is rooted in attraction, but it takes Jade longer to realize the possibility of happiness right in front of her. The football details showcase the passion for the sport among the heroines, and how hard it is for them to succeed as female coaches. This slow burn romance is a delightful read with plenty of humor and emotion. —*Amy Alessio*

Sometimes You Stay.

By Liz Johnson.

May 2025. 304p. Revell, paper, \$18.99 (9780800744892); e-book (9781493450633).

When travel influencer Cretia falls into the ocean off Prince Edward Island, all her belongings go in too. Having grown up with a hoarder mother, she is a determined wanderer, refusing to settle down, and so she travels light, with only a backpack of electronics and a practical suitcase. Now she watches that suitcase float away with her cash and credit cards—but local Finn and his dog are able to pull her and her backpack out. The electronics are all ruined, so wanderer Cretia is forced to stay at Red Door Inn for a while as her items are replaced and shipped, walking daily over to Finn's dog breeding business to use his internet. Finn has poured everything into his business. Now he finds he looks forward to Cretia's daily visits and they each make the other question if changes would improve their lives, and whether love would make those changes worthwhile. The animals provide humor among the slow burn attraction. The clever twist on the forced proximity trope works well in this charming, sweet romance. —*Amy Alessio*

The Unlikely Pursuit of Mary Bennet.

By Lindz McLeod.

May 2025. 320p. Harlequin/Carina Adores, paper, \$18.99 (9781335928269); e-book (9780369760814).

Charlotte is a young widow with few avenues open for her future. Lady Catherine de Bourgh has allowed her to continue living in the parsonage for now, but she'll need to either find a new husband or return to her parents' home. Charlotte alerts her dear friend, Mrs. Darcy, but her young son's poor health keeps Lizzy from visiting, so she sends her sister Mary instead. Even after knowing the Bennet sisters for decades, Charlotte quickly discovers she has new things to learn about, and from, Mary. The biggest lesson: love is love and it should be celebrated wherever it's found. But can Charlotte overcome her fear of society's judgement to live as her authentic self? McLeod includes a thoughtful look at same-sex relationships in Regency-era England and refers lightly to characters from Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, while focusing on Charlotte and Mary and how they use the language of flowers to convey deep feelings as their romance delicately blossoms. For fans of Regency romances and of the contemporary friends-to-lovers stories created by Talia Hibbert and Casey McQuiston. —*Stacey Hayman*

Unshaken.

By Shelley Shepard Gray.

June 2025. 304p. Revell, paper, \$18.99 (9780800746049); e-book (9781493450619).

Stephanie Miller's life is in danger after she accidentally witnesses a murder. But entrusting her safety to the goodwill of English strangers goes against her restrictive Amish upbringing. Military veteran Hardy Anderson is a protector by instinct, but when his social worker sister places Stephanie in his protective care, he realizes that earning the terrified Amish woman's trust will take a different set of skills. As the murderer's hunt for Stephanie draws dangerously closer, the distance between Hardy and Stephanie's worlds begins to fade away, awakening the pair to their desperate desire for safety, belonging, and each other. Shepard Gray returns with another excellent blend of Amish and English life in a gripping story about confronting hardships in faith and God's enduring presence. *Unshaken* is set in modern-day southern Kentucky and features breathless suspense and a slow-burn Christian romance. Its compassionate representation of the delicate trust between people who walk with one another through trauma is intensified by the characters' experiences with family trauma, social work, and the foster care system. —*Kate Campos*

A Wager with the Matchmaker.

By Jody Hedlund.

May 2025. Bethany House, paper, \$18.99 (9780764241987); e-book (9781493450831).

Irish maid Alannah Darragh is forced to marry for safety from local thugs, but she

is certain the matchmaker has it completely wrong this time. Kiernan Shanahan is a wealthy gentleman with a list of wifely expectations Alannah knows she will never meet, including a sizable dowry to save his struggling businesses. But every eligible bachelorette Kiernan meets pales in comparison to the undeniable chemistry and connection he shares with Alannah. As dangerous threats against Alannah and his businesses intensify, Kiernan must decide whether to risk letting go of what he wanted in exchange for the chance to be with someone he truly needs. *A Wager with the Matchmaker* is the third installment in Hedlund's exceptionally entertaining Shanahan Match series (after *Saved by the Matchmaker*, 2024). Set against an 1849 St. Louis backdrop of Irish gangs, cultural identity, and class divisions, it explores the tensions between ambition, love, and the steadfast presence of God within a broken world. The forbidden romance and deferred desire positively sizzles from start to finish, and readers will cheer its bookish heroine toward her long-awaited happily ever after. —*Kate Campos*

Writing Mr. Right.

By Alina Khawaja.

June 2025. 304p. MIRA, paper, \$18.99 (9780778368663); e-book (9780369761255).

In the latest from Khawaja (*Maya's Laws of Love*, 2024), aspiring writer Ziya, while trying to make ends meet as a legal secretary, has finally sent out her manuscript for consideration—only to receive rejection after rejection. So on the eve of her thirtieth birthday, Ziya decides to give up writing for good, destroying all copies of her manuscript to instead focus on her legal career, deciding that part of her life is over. But the next morning, Ziya is confronted with Aashiq, a handsome man claiming to be her creative muse who insists she continues to pursue a writing career. Inserting himself into her life, and becoming a sort of life coach, Aashiq works to raise Ziya's confidence and get her writing again. Though the story often feels like a self-help book for writers, Aashiq's earnest encouragement and devotion to Ziya's success is both sweet and disarming. And while Ziya can sometimes seem a little naïve, her frustration at her failure will be relatable to many readers who have experienced setbacks in pursuing their dreams. —*Lindsey Allen*

SF/Fantasy & Horror

The Adventures of Mary Darling.

By Pat Murphy.

May 2025. 320p. Tachyon, paper, \$18.95 (9781616964382); e-book (9781616964399).

Award-winning sf/fantasy legend Murphy turns to Victoriana and legends to tell the tale of the mother of Wendy, John, and Michael Darling, who flew away with Peter Pan while

their nanny, the dog Nana, was chained up outside. When she assesses the scene, Mary Darling immediately knows what happened, because it turns out she and her brother also flew away with Peter Pan when they were children. She consults her uncle, Dr. John Watson, who brings Sherlock Holmes into the case. But when a doctor prescribes a rest cure for Mary, Mary knows she has to act. Gathering friends from her pre-housewife past, including a tailor originally from the Solomon Islands named Sam Smalls, she starts to make her way to Neverland to rescue her children. Murphy turns the Great Detective trope on its head, as Sherlock's involvement in the case is more interference than help, and she reframes Peter Pan as something sinister. This fantastical romp features pirates and fairies and adventure, explores the ill effects of gender roles and colonialism, and is a lot of fun. —*Susan Maguire*

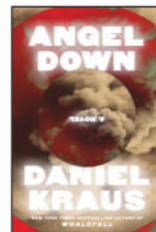


Angel Down.

By Daniel Kraus.

July 2025. 304p. Atria, \$28.99 (9781668068458); e-book (9781668068526).

Kraus' follow-up to *Whalefall* (2023) explores the same deeply emotional themes, this time in WWI France. Private Bagger has used his wits to stay alive in the trenches as



a latrine and grave digger. He and four other misfits are asked to stay behind in order to "take care" of a suffering soldier lying in the dangerous no-man's land between them and the Germans. However, it is not a soldier they find screaming—it is an angel, fallen from heaven and stuck in barbed wire. As the men travel to rejoin their unit, carrying the angel, each is mesmerized by her light and tempted by her power. She could save them all or lead to their deaths. The book unfolds like a chant, in short paragraphs each beginning with the word *and*, and readers will quickly fall under Bagger's narrative spell as they see the visceral and gruesome toll war takes on the entire planet. Is Bagger going to survive through a miracle or by luck? A brilliant novel that will encourage its readers to live their best lives, despite the horrors that surround them. For fans of John Milas' *The Militia House* (2023) and thought-provoking tales that sow discomfort through story and narrative structure, such as Agustina Bazterrica's *The Unworthy* (2025). —*Becky Spratford*

Below the Grand Hotel.

By Cat Scully.

May 2025. 286p. illus. CLASH, paper, \$19.95 (9781960988584).

Mabel wants nothing more than to be a Ziegfeld girl, but for now, she is living hand to mouth, robbing people to keep herself housed and fed. When she follows a wealthy woman wearing a diamond necklace into the Grand

Hotel, Mabel is offered the chance to make all of her dreams come true. The price? Her soul. Scully convincingly recreates the Gatsbyesque world of a lavish hotel in 1920s New York City. She includes the glitz and the glamour, yes, but also the devastating hardship for those on the outside. Readers will eagerly follow Mabel as she races against time through the constantly shifting, alluring, awe-inspiring but extremely sinister hallways of the hotel (a character in itself) to steal back her soul and hopefully destroy the evil force at the hotel's foundation. Suggest this debut to those who like tales of artists making dark deals in pursuit of their craft, like Kat Howard's *Roses and Rot* (2016), and to fans of strong women kicking demon butt, as in Johnny Compton's *Devils Kill Devils* (2024). —*Becky Spratford*

★ **The Bewitching.** By Silvia Moreno-Garcia.

July 2025. 368p. Del Rey, \$29 (9780593874325); e-book (9780593874332).

Minerva Contreras is a graduate student at Stoneridge College in 1998, researching obscure horror author Beatrice Tremblay, herself an alumna of the school whose roommate, Virginia Somerset, disappeared when they were students in the 1930s. When Minerva gains access to an unpublished manuscript of Beatrice's, she realizes it's an account of Virginia's last days at Stoneridge. The tale details Virginia's belief that she was being stalked by a malignant presence, a chain of events Minerva recognizes from her great-grandmother Alba's stories of battling a witch in rural Mexico. Before long, Minerva feels the darkness coming for her as well and must draw on the wisdom inherited from Alba to survive. Moreno-Garcia (*The Seventh Veil of Salome*, 2024) immerses readers in multiple settings; the shifting perspectives keep the tension high as the book barrels to the final confrontation. It's a thoroughly enjoyable book about power, privilege, dark magic, and the capacity for stories to transcend them all. Recommend to readers who enjoyed witchy novels such as Alexis Henderson's *The Year of the Witching* (2020) or V. Castro's *Goddess of Filth* (2021) as well as gothic horror like Caitlin Starling's *The Death of Jane Lawrence* (2021) or T. Kingfisher's *What Moves the Dead* (2022). —*Stephanie Klose*

★ **Black Salt Queen.** By Samantha Bansil.

June 2025. 416p. Bindery, paper, \$18.95 (9781959411987); e-book (9781959411994).

Laya Gatdula, crown princess of Maynara, has been blessed by the gods. With the power of the wind at her fingertips, Laya can have anything she wants . . . almost. What she wants most is Luntok, son of the traitorous Kulaw family. Generations before, the Gatdulas defeated the Kulaws in a near-civil war,

and have held on to their rule through the god-blessed power they wield. Laya and Luntok are in love, but, as Hara Duja asks, "what good [is] love in the face of power?" Hara Duja, queen of Maynara, was in love with a Kulaw once but had to choose power over love in the face of betrayal. When the Gatdulas are overthrown in a coup, Hara Duja is confronted by the woman whose heart she broke. Is it too late for love to conquer all? Bansil's debut, the first in a proposed series, is a captivating read filled with love, power and betrayal, set against a lush island background. Readers will eagerly await the second installment. —*LynnDee Wathen*

★ **Bochica.** By Carolina Flórez-Cerchiaro.

May 2025. 256p. Atria/Primero Sueno, \$27.99 (9781668062579); e-book (9781668062593).

Set in 1920s Bogotá, Colombia, Flórez-Cerchiaro's gothic masterwork tells the story of Antonia, a young woman who is unable to escape her family home and the guilt that gnaws at her over the circumstances of her mother's death. When Antonia describes demonic possession to girls she tutors at a local school—girls she is supposed to be teaching about Christian purity and how to excel in the domestic sphere—she may be speaking from firsthand experience. Flórez-Cerchiaro transports readers to the gritty streets of Bogotá as Antonia questions what evil looks like to someone who has survived real darkness. Her story unfurls like a rich tapestry as the past and familial trauma continue to devour her present. She struggles with the desire to escape her family's fetters while trapped by the home, and she needs to protect her father. Antonia also grapples with her feelings for Alejandro, who seems kind at first. As time goes on, he leads her down a more dangerous path. Fans who loved *Mexican Gothic*, by Silvia Moreno-Garcia (2020), and the works of Isabel Cañas, Agustina Bazterrica, and Leigh Bardugo will devour *Bochica* and find much to appreciate in its lush, gothic atmosphere of religious horror. —*A. E. Siraki*

★ **The Chosen Queen.** By Sam Davey.

June 2025. 352p. Diversión, \$28.99 (9798895150399); e-book (9798895150337).

Arthurian legend has long been a deep well from which myriad retellings have been drawn. Davey's first entry in her Pendragon Prophecies series adds to this body by centering Igraine, Arthur's mother. A devoted wife to the duke of Cornwall and mother to two young daughters, Igraine is caught up in a web of life-altering political machinations when King Uther Pendragon takes notice of her. This Britain is one at the end of Roman rule, with great changes afoot. Merlin may

be a powerful magician and the mysteries of the goddess celebrated, but other powers, particularly Christianity, are on the rise, and these competing systems inform much of the tragedy to come. The focus on the roles of women—Igraine and her sister Elaine, Lady of the Lake Vivian—and the futures promised by Igraine's daughters Morgan and Morgause—may remind Arthurian fans of Marian Zimmer Bradley's *Mists of Avalon* series, though the world here is more grounded in its detail and interpersonal relationships. A great opening chapter for a series providing a refreshing twist on a classic story. —*Sarah Rice*

★ **Ecstasy.** By Ivy Pochoda.

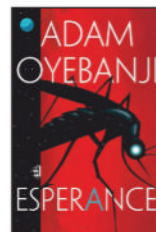
June 2025. 224p. Putnam, \$28 (9780593851173); e-book (9780593851180).

A year after the sudden death of her controlling husband, former dancer Lena travels to Naxos, Greece, with her equally controlling adult son; Drew, his pregnant wife; Jordan; and Lena's freewheeling best friend, Hedy, to celebrate the opening of Agape Villas, Drew's luxury beachside resort. Long accustomed to the constraints of upper-class life, Lena hopes to recapture some of the youthful freedom she once shared with Hedy, for whom the party never ended. But the domineering Drew insists that the pair stay away from the beach, whose serene views have been blighted by the presence of women in tents. Drew's orders only pique Lena's curiosity, and one night she joins the women, quickly finding herself swept into a heady world of intrigue and desire. Pochoda's (*Sing Her Down*, 2023) lyrical and dreamlike latest is a contemporary horror reimagining of Euripides' tragedy *The Bacchae*, perfect for fans of Greek retellings and novels that explore feminine rage and empowerment, like Rachel Yoder's *Night-bitch* (2021) or Kirsten Miller's *The Change* (2022). —*Kaitlin Conner*

★ **Esperance.** By Adam Oyeibanji.

May 2025. 432p. DAW, \$29 (9780756419912); e-book (9780756419929).

This excellent sf-thriller opens with Ethan Krol looking at three beings on the floor of his twentieth-floor Chicago apartment: a man, his son, and a barracuda. The humans appear to have drowned in seawater. None of the video cameras show who arrived at the apartment, but Ethan's team knows that someone came to the door with a large package. The case only gets stranger when reports come in of similar situations in Africa and Rhode Island. Meanwhile, Abidemi Eniola steps from a gate in a field of grass and makes her way into Edinburgh, speaking as if she is straight out of a Cary Grant movie. She is searching for information about the captain



and owners of the *Esperance*, a slave ship from the late 1700s. Abidemi is strong and clever with jerry-rigging cell phones that connect with her brain. Her path eventually crosses with Ethan and his counterpart from Rhode Island, and the victims are connected with the *Esperance*. Oyebanji (*Two Times Murder*, 2024) continues to raise the stakes as the cats catch up with not a mouse but a man of the Earth but not from the Earth—a man seeking justice. Fans of Charles Stross' near-future police procedurals will be drawn to this one. —Don Vicha

A Far Better Thing.

By H. G. Parry.

June 2025. 416p. Tor, paper, \$18.99 (9781250334183); e-book (9781250334190).

Rumors of a revolution in France are simmering, but Sydney Carton doesn't care much about them—he has problems of his own. Raised in the Faery Realm and bound to follow fae orders for the rest of his life, he spends his days doing the best work he can as a lawyer and his nights drinking away memories of Ivy, the girl he grew up with. But one day, he's confronted with an unexpected sight: the changeling who the fae replaced him with is in Faerie, and the resemblance is uncanny. It turns out that the faeries have plans for him, and he's about to be drawn unwillingly into a dangerous game of murder, betrayal, and sordid family secrets. This book, a magical rendition of Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*, is a richly woven historical fantasy that starts slowly but soon becomes addictive. The fae are convincingly terrifying, and readers will root for Sydney's attempts to carve out some autonomy for himself and protect the ones he loves in a Europe steadily approaching war. —Leah von Essen

The Ghosts of Gwendolyn Montgomery.

By Clarence A. Haynes.

June 2025. 240p. Legacy Lit, \$29 (9781538768518); e-book (9781538768532).

Gwendolyn is a highly motivated publicist whose events can make or break celebrities. She's long since put her past behind her, including her magic and the way her godmother had her use it. But the Intermedio, where the spirits roam, is not done with her yet. She and her medium cousin, Fonsi, soon discover that a breach is opening between the worlds. And the further it opens, the more spirits will pass through, wreaking havoc on the people of New York City. Gwen and Fonsi must confront their inner demons and their shared childhood if they're going to succeed in warding off this mystical threat. Haynes (author with Omar Epps of the YA sf/fantasy, *Nubia*, 2022) draws on Yoruba orisha (deities) and practices to create a solo debut fantasy that has a compelling, diverse cast of characters and a little bit of romance. His success lies in the two charismatic and multilayered protagonists, cousins Gwen and Fonsi, as well as in the frightening, bloody scares they endure from poltergeists and vi-

sions. Also an ode to queer and marginalized communities. —Leah von Essen

The Last Vigilant.

By Mark A. Latham.

June 2025. 592p. Orbit, paper, \$19.99 (9780316574457); e-book (9780316574464).

Hawley is a soldier with terrible secrets in his past and a sense of honor despite a tarnished reputation. He has been sent with a company of men to try and find a missing child, but when that company attempts to kill Hawley and are instead killed by an unknown creature of the forest, Hawley seeks the help of Enelda, a wise, no-nonsense old woman whom he soon realizes is a person of legend—one of the famed Vigilants, who can commune with the immortal realm and use magic. Enelda is out of practice and disturbed at finding herself on a journey, but despite a rocky start, she and Hawley work together to survive. Latham (*The Red Tower*, 2018) uses his incredible world-building skills and all-consuming storytelling style to bring the reader deep into the village of Scarfell, where politics, magic, and corruption collide in a world-shaking explosion, and where Enelda is not the only legend to emerge from the shadows. In a genre where tropes can be overused, Latham is an adept at creating sympathetic characters and reinventing fantasy in a way that will have influence on many books after *The Last Vigilant*. —Lily Hunter

The Library at Hellebore. Deluxe ed.

By Cassandra Khaw.

July 2025. 288p. Tor Nightfire, \$29.99 (9781250877819); e-book (9781250877826).

After the onset of her magical powers and the subsequent, well-deserved but gruesome murder of her predator stepfather, Alessa is forcibly enrolled at the Hellebore Technical Institute for the Ambitiously Gifted, where she's told she will be redeemed. Yet the only thing Hellebore's strange faculty teach is survival of the fittest, and with a student body where everyone has "the potential to destroy the world three times over," it's a daily battle, culminating in literal slaughter at graduation, when the faculty transform and eat the students. Alessa and seven others take refuge in the library, where they should attempt to overcome their animosity to survive. Unfortunately, they're also monsters, and the library is Hellebore's most dangerous location. Sardonic, standoffish Alessa is the perfect antihero for this academic bloodbath, capable of just enough reluctant compassion to balance her earth-shattering rage. Khaw's (*The Salt Grows Heavy*, 2023) gorgeous prose is a visceral symphony of body horror, encompassing nightmarish transformations, cosmically horrific beings, and fascinating lore about this world's underexplored pantheon of gods and creatures. A treat for the darkest fans of dark academia. —Krista Hutley



My Ex, the Antichrist.

By Craig DiLouie.

July 2025. 416p. Run for It, paper, \$19.99 (9780316578189); e-book (9780316578196).

The Shivers were one of the biggest pop-punk bands of the early 2000s, but their origin story holds a dark, apocalyptic secret, one with which front woman Lily Lawless can no longer bear to live. So begins DiLouie's latest (after *How to Make a Horror Movie and Survive*, 2024), which unfolds on the page as an oral history of the band as told by Lily and others, as Lily sits in prison for murder. Readers follow The Shivers, led by Lily and her boyfriend Drake Morgan, as they quickly garner attention for their unique sound and the violence that follows in the wake of their performances. Cheekily playing off of the age-old accusation that harder-edged music is satanic, DiLouie spins a story that is fresh, entertaining, and intensely unsettling. Is Drake Morgan actually the Antichrist? The answer may leave readers existentially unmoored. An easy hand sell for fans of Grady Hendrix's *We Sold Our Souls* (2018) or Silvia Moreno-Garcia's *Silver Nitrate* (2023), but don't forget those who loved the discomforting verisimilitude of *The Ghost That Ate Us* (2022), by Daniel Kraus. —Becky Spratford

YA: The action here focuses around the adult characters' years as college students; the story will appeal to music-obsessed teen horror fans whose parents don't "get" their faves. BS.

One Yellow Eye.

By Leigh Radford.

July 2025. 352p. Gallery, \$28.99 (9781668081211); e-book (9781668081235).

Londoner Kesta Shelley is a cancer researcher with a huge secret: she's keeping her husband, Tim, who was infected during the zombie apocalypse, secured and sedated in her guest room. Kesta struggles to keep her unbearable grief at bay as she holds out hope that someone will find a cure for the mysterious virus before Tim's body decays past the point of no return or he's discovered and destroyed. Then she's recruited to join top-secret research lab Project Dawn, where she makes two big discoveries, the origin of the virus and the fact that there are people in power working against a cure. The specifics of the apocalypse itself are sparse and the gore factor low, but Kesta's single-minded focus and increasingly unhinged decisions create a mounting sense of dread and terror to rival any on-page bloodbath. Fans of *Our Wives under the Sea* (2022), by Julia Armfield, will be thrilled to get their hands on another beautifully written, horror-tinged exploration of love and grief, but the book will likely also be a good fit for readers who enjoyed Sarah Lyons Fleming's *Until the End of the World* (2013) or Lucy A. Snyder's *Sister, Maiden, Monster* (2023). —Stephanie Klose



Realms of the Round Table.

By John Matthews.

June 2025. 352p. illus. Pegasus, \$35 (9781639369034); e-book (9781639369041).

Arthurian Britain is a dangerous and wondrous place, scattered with dragons, giants, castles, and assorted paths that lead unsuspecting knights into faerie lands. The cast of characters in this anthology is a mix of familiar and unknown; many of these Round Table knights' adventures were written in other languages—French, German, Italian, Dutch, and Spanish—and focus on less famous names. They are assembled here by a nameless scribe, reminiscent of Thomas Malory's approach to Arthurian tales in the 1400s. With the exception of Sir Gawain, most of the familiar names—King Arthur, Queen Guinevere, Lancelot—are mentioned only in passing, largely setting the scene and the era's standards of chivalry, influencing the deeds of others such as Tom of Lincoln, Caradoc, and Meleranz. Every story is an adventure, introducing Gawain's many love interests, several different Black Knights who are vanquished by assorted heroes, a friendship falling apart over a shared love interest—always knowing that chivalrous behavior conquers all obstacles. This compilation of lesser-known stories and artist John Howe's illustrations will delight both casual readers and Arthurian scholars. —*Frances Moritz*

A Resistance of Witches.

By Morgan Ryan.

July 2025. 416p. Viking, \$30 (9780593831960); e-book (9780593831977).

Having rejected the herbs and low magic of her mother, Lydia Polk is the right hand of the Grand Mistress, who oversees England's Royal Academy of Witches. While English witches have traditionally stayed out of world affairs, Grand Mistress Isadora sees that, without the witches' help, Hitler is sure to win the war. Isadora then tasks Lydia with finding magical relics before the Nazis do. One such artifact, a book

called the Grimorium Bellum, is incredibly potent and dangerous enough that whoever possesses it will win the war. During a ceremony to locate the book, the Academy is infiltrated by a Nazi witch, who leaves tragedy in her wake. A heartbroken Lydia must now leave England and go to France, the last known location of the book. In France, Lydia befriends French resistance fighter Rebecca and art historian Henry, and the two become integral to her quest. In her stunning debut, Ryan mixes fantasy, historical fiction, and a tiny bit of romance with great aplomb. Ultimately a story of mothers and the powerful magic they possess, this character-driven fantasy adventure novel is perfect for fans of H. G. Parry's *Shadow Histories* duology and anyone who loves some magic with their historical fiction. —*Lynnanne Pearson*

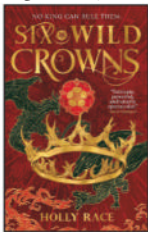


Six Wild Crowns.

By Holly Race.

June 2025. 416p. Orbit, \$30 (9780316572927); e-book (9780316572941).

In the first of a new series, YA author Race (*Midnight's Twins*, 2020), in her adult debut, revisits British history but adds some interesting fantasy elements. The Kingdom of Elben must have one king and six queens to stay safe from their enemies because their god, in granting the king the strength to protect his kingdom, established six castles along the coast, each of which must have a queen in residence with a bond in marriage to the king. As long as the rules are followed, the king is also granted magic and a protective charm on the island. The story is told from the perspectives, in alternating chapters, of Boleyn and Seymour. Boleyn is a queen, but is still an independent woman with thoughts and opinions, i.e., a troublemaker. Seymour is one of her ladies-in-waiting with a scheming family and a secret. All six queens existing at the same time lends itself to some interesting conversations and political maneuverings, though ultimately the society is still a patriarchy, and readers will cheer as Boleyn and Seymour fight the power. Readers of historical fiction or fantasy will thoroughly enjoy this feminist reimagining of King Henry VIII and his wives. —*Emily Whitmore*



A Song of Legends Lost.

By M. H. Ayinde.

June 2025. 592p. Saga, paper, \$19.99 (9781668086834); e-book (9781668086841).

Technology is forbidden and should be turned in to the clergy for destruction. Using it allegedly attracts the greybloods, abandoned living creations who are now engaged in an unending war with the Nine Lands. Nobles and peasants alike are drawn into the war, with a specific focus on nobles, the only people who can invoke their ancestors' spirits in battle. In the Lords-grave slum, Temi's family sells baked goods with a side business selling water-purifying techwork votives. When Temi's brother is killed, and the family is blackmailed into making more votives for a crime family, Temi unexpectedly invokes a spirit that helps her. Meanwhile, the Itahua and Mizito clans are drawn into intrigue as lost family members return in questionable mental states, and the Itahua family discovers their Lord Invoker has disavowed their ancestors in favor of an unusual pair of healers. Jinao, Mizito clan's drunken disappointment, is led on a quest by the greyblood who killed his mother. Ayinde's debut strikes a fine balance between narrators of different classes, world building and action, and sf and fantasy, culminating in a shocking conclusion that will leave readers anxiously awaiting the rest of the proposed Invoker Trilogy. —*Frances Moritz*



The Starving Saints.

By Caitlin Starling.

May 2025. 352p. Harper Voyager, \$30 (9780063418813); e-book (9780063418837).

This medieval fever dream is seasoned with sapphic romance but thoroughly marinated in cannibalistic body horror. Under siege for months and with supplies dwindling, those in Aymar Castle begin to consider more gruesome methods to sustain themselves and deal with the surplus of corpses and potential corpses. Then four mysterious, supernatural figures descend upon the castle, driving most everyone into full-blown bacchanalian butchery. Only three women (a duty-bound knight, a nun turned sorceress, and a serving girl seeking revenge) have a hope of stopping the castle's inhabitants from completely devouring themselves. Like in *The Luminous Dead* (2019), Starling demonstrates a flair for world building against type, creating a fantasy world where dragons and unicorns are replaced with death and disease. Even the mysterious saints seem to be influenced more by Clive Barker's imagination than Christian iconography. Eventually, the book becomes less like *The Canterbury Tales* and more like Dante's descent into hell. However, Starling cleverly balances the carnage-filled surrealism with three women who show their love in ways both passionate and deep. Fans of Christopher Buehman's take on medieval storytelling should eat up this story, but Barker fans will also savor the blood-soaked imagery. —*James Gardner*



The Two Lies of Faven Sythe.

By Megan E. O'Keefe.

June 2025. 448p. Orbit, paper, \$19.99 (9780316572026); e-book (9780316572033).

Faven Sythe has a problem that only an outer space pirate captain named Bitter Amandine can solve. Faven's mentor has been sent to an area of space called the Clutch; everyone, even pirate captains, tries to avoid the region. But Faven has noticed that other cryst-born individuals, not just her mentor, have been sent to this area of space and are never heard from again. Cryst-born individuals are humanoid beings that start off as the glass-like cryst, a substance that runs the world. Faven, in her desire to figure out what is going on with those sent to the Clutch, goes against orders and tries to hire Amandine to help her. The partnership is a bit bumpy at first, but the resulting dynamic between the two is dynamite and hilarious. Both characters are endearing, tough, and funny rebels, and together the pair will solve a mystery that has plagued the universe. It is charming to see two of society's outcasts fight to win the day and find each other. Readers will enjoy this high-stakes outer-space adventure with a touch of a queer love story. —*Emily Whitmore*

A Beautiful Family. By Jennifer Trevelyan.

June 2025. 320p. Doubleday, \$28 (9780385551359); e-book (9780385551366).

It's 1985, and the Owen family holiday has begun. They're at a popular beach destination two hours away from their home in Wellington, New Zealand, and nothing is quite right. The parents are tense, arguing over who will chaperone their two daughters by the water, and their daughters are not cooperating. Teenager Vanessa wants to hang out with her friends, which leaves her 10-year-old sister, the book's unnamed narrator, free to explore. Our narrator observes much but doesn't always understand—Vanessa's sneaking out at night is dubious, as are her mother's wanderings. She's uncomfortable encountering her friend Lucy and troubled by xenophobic comments her parents make about Lucy's Chinese family. Worse, a creepy old neighbor is always watching. The girl befriends 12-year-old Kahu, who is Māori. He whispers that he's searching for Charlotte, a girl who disappeared two years earlier, and invites the narrator to join him. When another person goes missing, all the secrets converge, threatening the family's solidarity. Trevelyan's taut thriller debut hauntingly captures the end of innocence through a child's eyes. —Karen Clements

Big Bad Wool.

By Leonie Swann. Tr. by Amy Bojang.

May 2025. 384p. Soho, \$28.95 (9781641296625); e-book (9781641296632).

Swann presents her long-awaited second book in her wondrous, weird, magical, and humorous Sheep Detective series (after *Three Bags Full*, 2007) starring a flock of sheep with very distinct personalities and the ability to "speak sheep" among themselves, with humans playing supporting roles. Along with their shepherdess, Rebecca, the sheep have migrated from Ireland to a grassy meadow in France, and although it's located next to a former mental hospital and a field of rambunctious goats, it's nice enough. But with winter in full swing and snow deep on the ground, bad things start happening. The bodies of deer and other animals are found in the forest, shot and bloodied. The goats claim the killer is the Garou, who (bizarrely) emerges from a wardrobe in the woods and changes shape before killing its prey. When the sheep find a dead human, they decide to use their "woolpower" to track down—and stop—the Garou. This unique mystery has a tense and twisted plot that's lightened by bits of magical realism and the often-hilarious antics of the sheep detectives. A complete original. —Emily Melton

The Busybody Book Club.

By Freya Sampson.

May 2025. 384p. Berkley, paper, \$19 (9780593550557); e-book (9780593550564).

Sampson (*Nosy Neighbors*, 2024) has a knack for pulling together a ragtag, multigenerational

Spotlight on Mysteries & Thrillers

crew of charming characters, and this time, she adds crime to the mix. Nova moved to tiny St. Tredock, Cornwall, to escape a bad situation in London and to marry her boyfriend, Craig. She loves her job at the community center, though the book club's membership isn't as robust as it could be. There's Miss Marple-obsessed Phyllis and her flatulent dog, Craddock; farmer Arthur, who reads romance novels with his homebound wife; teenager Ash, who barely speaks; and Michael, a suspicious figure who runs out of the meeting early. Then the money to repair the community center's roof is stolen, and Nova is blamed. To clear Nova's name, they decide to confront Michael, at Phyllis' insistence, and discover he has disappeared, and his mother has been murdered. Much to Nova's fiancé's chagrin, they continue to investigate, uncovering debts and affairs and a dilapidated cottage by the sea. This cozy mystery has strong caper vibes and lots of bookish references, a real treat for readers. —Susan Maguire

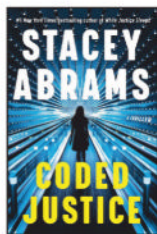


Coded Justice.

By Stacey Abrams.

July 2025. 432p. Doubleday, \$30 (9780385548342); e-book (9780385548359).

Abrams's Avery Keene, the brilliant lawyer-turned-investigator with ice-pick-sharp analytical skills, returns, following *Rogue Justice* (2022), to face a complicated new challenge: nefarious dealings at a high-tech healthcare firm. Rafe Diaz, tech wizard and hunky former soldier, is developing a high-level "artificial generative intelligence" to provide comprehensive medical care for struggling veterans. A freak accident has just killed



one of his top engineers days before the company is about to go public. Is a disgruntled employee or competitor trying to scuttle the deal? Or is something more disturbing going on? It's up to Avery and her crack team—doctor and BFF Ling, lawyer and financial analyst Noah, and boyfriend and special ops security expert Jared—to find out. As the body count rises and the suspect list balloons, Avery can't help but wonder just how intelligent and deviant this AI system might be and how far Diaz and company will go to protect their investment. Abrams enriches this fast-paced thriller with her sense of social justice: most of the main characters are people of color motivated less by greed than by their experiences with institutional racism. The very real concerns with veteran health, privacy, and the chilling pros-



Adult

Art from *We Solve Murders*.

pect of AI run amok will engage readers' brains and souls. —Lesley Williams



HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: Fans of Abrams' best-selling series will not be denied, and the AI and healthcare themes will create even more interest.

Cold Is the Deep.

By George Wallace.

July 2025. 304p. Severn River, paper, \$17.99 (9781648756382).

A MacGuffin, as every mystery fan knows, is a plot device to crank up the action in a story. Author Wallace has come up with a beauty. A Russian spy at work within the U.S. Navy has found a perfect drop for sneaked photos: a dusty antique box in a dusty shop. Just his luck that the wife of a submarine's commanding officer at the Norfolk Naval Base fancied the box and her husband bought it for her, asking that she not open it until he returned from a tour of duty. One plotline—for many, likely the most interesting—concerns the wife, who has no idea why these scary men are menacing her and her children. Another, and Wallace may know the audience for this, is an awful lot of technological jargon. One wonders how many lines like "satellite in sun-synchronous polar orbit" the general landlubber brain can take. An unexpected treat is a thrilling rescue of plane wreck survivors in a killing-cold ocean—read it on a hot day. —Don Crinklaw

A Cold Whisper.

By Casey Dunn.

May 2025. 272p. Severn, \$29.99 (9781448315970); e-book (9781448316618).

Lily's never understood why her older sister left her wrapped in a coat in the wintry Tennessee woods after they ran from home decades before. Now a social worker, she still looks for Rose and answers everywhere. Meanwhile, Rose is back in town, stripped to her thorns by drug addiction and the ugly side of sex work. She's determined to hunt a monster, but as she sets her sights on a sleazy strip-club mogul, Rose wonders if she's become monstrous herself. It's a worry newly minted homicide detective Daniel shares when he encounters both Lily and Rose in the course of investigating missing and murdered teens found in the local park. Conflicting evidence accumulates faster than snow flurries as Daniel and his veteran cop half-brother clash over how to handle the case. Is Rose a killer? Is Lily helping or hindering the investigation? Will the sisters ever reunite? Multiple points

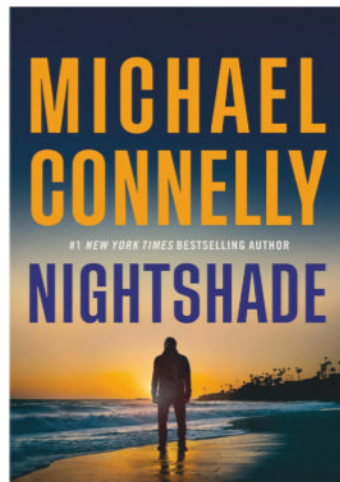
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The Booklist Interview

Michael Connelly

By Donna Seaman

Booklist caught up with Michael Connelly as *Nightshade*, his fortieth book, was poised for release, preceded by a starred Booklist review. With a new protagonist, Los Angeles County Sheriff's Detective Stilwell, who has been banished to a lowly posting in an intriguing setting, *Nightshade* launches a new series.

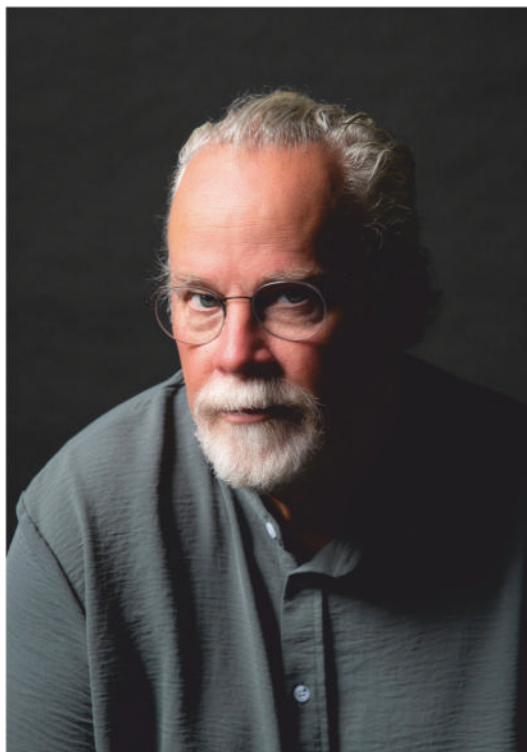


Seaman: *Your novels are propelled by justice-seekers. Who or what inspired Stilwell, your newest police detective?*

Connelly: It was more like the place was the inspiration this time. I had heard a number of years ago that the island of Catalina, which is part of Los Angeles County and is under the Sheriff's Department's authority in terms of law enforcement, had one detective. I thought, well, that's a pretty interesting set-up. So that was the starting point. As for my justice-seekers, for 39 books I've written about people who don't have a sustained relationship with anybody. I thought, that should be my challenge, because when people have that longing for companionship, that's part of what motivates them. It's easier to write a character who is missing pieces. So, the challenge with this book was to write about someone who was in a good relationship, a loving relationship. A guy who would like, open the door and say, "Honey, I'm home." I've never written that before. Stilwell got vanished, as he says, to the island of misfit toys, but he finds a home there.

Seaman: *Catalina Island is such an alluring setting. What drew you there?*

Connelly: The island was pretty much settled and owned by the Wrigley family, so it began as an elite retreat. But it's only 22 miles from L.A., and over the decades, it's become a place that many people go for a quick getaway. So there are folks with mega-yachts and attractions for visitors, but there's also a real working-class element. The island also has a herd of bison; some say they were brought out when they were shooting a film. Whatever the source, they're now protected. Catalina also has a rich history involving alleged sightings of UFOs and USOs (unidentified submerged objects). I've been going out there probably since the nineties, noting all the things that draw people there, so I was trying to come up with a story that would incorporate a lot of the quirkiness of the island.



Katherine K. Westerman

Seaman: *You've created a vivid set of characters. I was struck by the pesky reporter, Lionel McKey. He made me think of your beginnings as a journalist and how important journalism is. Is there a synergy, for you, between journalism and fiction?*

Connelly: In my case they are closely related. I wanted to write crime fiction, but I didn't really know anything about it. I was not a cop and didn't get involved in things like that when I was younger. So I went into journalism to get on the police beat and watch the detectives to see how they work and to talk to them.

So I'm here because I was a journalist. It was a great job. I had a great time. And I care about it. So I am always trying to incorporate a little bit about my history. I've written some novels about investigative journalist Jack McEvoy and there's a lot of me in him, but also with Lionel McKey. In fact, all the letters in my name are in his. And yeah, I viewed him the way I viewed myself on my first job after college when I worked in a backwoods area of Florida for the *Daytona Beach News Journal*. I was exactly like Lionel, always coming up to the one detective assigned to the town I covered. I've worked on small papers and I've worked on big papers and, you know, the media is part of the whole circle of the justice system.

Seaman: *We are in a time where we need to reassert the crucial role of a free press in our democracy. Genuine reporting is under threat economically and politically. Sup-*

pression and censorship is a great concern.

Connelly: Absolutely. I agree. There's a void that hasn't been filled by the internet. A lot of what has collapsed the American newspaper business is associated with the internet, and a lot of local coverage has not moved there; it's been lost. And the watchdog journalism that has always been so important in big

and small towns is very quickly evaporating. Where is that going to leave us when we don't have this kind of independent investigating?

Seaman: *You've sown some seeds for future Stilwell cases in Nightshade, so it sure seems like a series starter.*

Connelly: I started a lot of my series as one-offs, and then I end up liking the characters; I just instinctively know they'll be back. And that's how I feel about this. I keep thinking in terms of little town, big crime. So I need something with a lot of meat on the bone for it to happen, and in reality, there hasn't been a murder out on Catalina Island in decades. But that's my job, to find some big thing or some connections. All my books are part of the same quilt. Stilwell is not connected to Harry Bosch or Renée Ballard or anybody. That will be the task of the next book, to somehow integrate Stilwell into the whole universe I've been building for years.

Seaman: *I'm curious about your navigating creatively between the page and the screen, given the tremendous success of the films and streaming series based on your books. And I can't help but picture the setting of Nightshade as camera bait. Has your screen success influenced your writing? What's the dynamic?*

Connelly: Well, I try to keep my head down when I'm writing stories. I think I'm a visual writer, but I don't write thinking about a second-tier plan for TV. I really savor what books are. That's where you can go inside the minds of people and explore what they're thinking and how they look at the world, which you can't really get into in a script. I've enjoyed having these shows. I think they've done a wonderful job. I think people think I'm more involved than I am. I'm usually quite involved in the first year or so in casting the main characters because I want

them to be as close as I can get to the characters in the books. But for the most part, I want to concentrate on being a book writer. What happens, happens. But I'd be lying if I don't say that I know when something is cinematic and there's probably nothing more cinematic than a story set on an island. So something may come from this.

Seaman: *On another front in the battle to protect free speech, politically orchestrated assaults on books and libraries continue to increase. Have you had any experience with libraries you'd like to share, or thoughts on all these book challenges and book bans?*

Connelly: I'm very much involved, especially in Florida, where I grew up; my wife is a native Floridian, and we still have a place there. So I've been involved in the efforts there to protect libraries from all these encroachments, all these attacks. It really came to fruition to me because, you know, every writer will have pivotal moments in their life that led them to do what they want to do. Mine was in a library, when a librarian had me read *To Kill a Mockingbird*. This was in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. A couple of years ago, I heard that that book was banned in some Florida counties; Palm Beach County, for example, where I also worked as a journalist early in my life. For me, that was eye-opening. So that's when I got involved with PEN America. We also, basically, funded a lawyer to open an office in Florida to monitor what's happening in these assaults on library and schools. So this is very important to me because I think if that librarian hadn't given me that book, I might not have ever written the Lincoln lawyer books. I draw a direct line between Atticus Finch, who risked a lot to do the right thing, to this more contemporary lawyer, Mickey Haller, who risks a lot to do the right thing. I think he's a direct descendant of Harper Lee's Atticus. So, yes, this is all very important to me.

Continued from p.45

of view, not all of them reliable, converge in this bitterly chilling storm that addresses sibling loyalties, sex trafficking, and the flaws in both social services and law enforcement. It will leave readers with bone-deep shivers. —*Mala Bhattacharjee*

The Dark Library.

By Mary Anna Evans.

June 2025, 384p. Poisoned Pen, paper, \$17.99 (9781728293677); e-book (9781728293684).

E's mother has been missing for months and the police investigation has gone cold. Dr. Estella Emily Ecker, E for short, a professor specializing in gothic literature, is called back to the family estate, Rockfall House, where she does not want to be. Her controlling father fell ill and died, taking any clues about her mother to his grave. Putting aside her strained relationship with him and her passive, cold mother, E is the only one left to deal with the estate, its precarious finances, and the mystery surrounding her mother. She finds herself entrenched in the estate's complex web of past and present mysteries as she begins going through her father's vast collections of rare books and art. Finding more than just paper, ink, and paint, she finds herself going down a path of increasingly dark family secrets. Evans uses suspense, gothic themes, and well-timed twists and turns to deftly push E forward in her search for an-

swers about her parents, the estate, and the community at large. —*Amia Wheatley*

A Daughter's Guide to Mothers and Murder.

By Dianne Freeman.

June 2025, 304p. Kensington, \$27 (9781496745149); e-book (9781496745163).

Frances Hazelton and her husband, George, are on vacation in Paris when Frances is asked by a friend to look into Carlson Deaver's past, as Deaver is courting her daughter and his wife, former actress Isabelle Rousseau, died under suspicious circumstances. The plot thickens when Frances and George are recruited by Daniel Cadieux, a detective inspector with the Sûreté, to investigate when a note and piece of stolen jewelry received by Sarah Bernhardt implicate the beloved French performer in the crime, and no one on the force wants to touch the case. Frances and George consider the possible suspects, including Bernhardt, and as their suspect pool diminishes, another murder occurs. They must untangle whether the two murders are connected and, if so, how, as a series of stunning revelations upends their efforts. Frances goes undercover to advance their investigation then hatches a plan to force a confession from the killer. Framed by its beautifully described, immersive 1900-Paris setting, this engaging historical mystery includes sympathetic, well-drawn characters and numerous plot twists to keep readers guessing. —*Sue O'Brien*



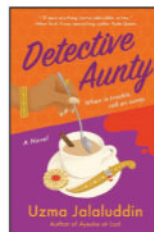
Detective Aunty.

By Uzma Jalaluddin.

May 2025, 336p. HarperPerennial, paper, \$17.99 (9780063434875); e-book (9780063434882).

After her panicked daughter, Sana, calls Kausar Khan and tells her that she has been charged with killing the landlord of her clothing boutique, Kausar, a widow, puts aside her years' long hesitation about returning to Toronto. Upon arriving at her daughter's home in the Golden Crescent neighborhood, Kausar immediately sets about helping in any way she can while staying vigilantly alert for any information or gossip that might lead to the identity of the real killer. Although Kausar is not actually a detective, she does have real talents for listening to people and observing things: the key skills

any detective needs to solve a crime. Jalaluddin (*Three Holidays and a Wedding*, 2023) deftly pivots from writing romance novels to launching a mystery series: Kausar Khan Investigates. This cleverly crafted tale gracefully tips its literary cap to Golden Age mysteries while at the same time entering a relevant and intriguing twenty-first-century plot into the genre equation. Featuring a superbly nuanced protagonist—an aunty and grandmother who cares as much about her community as Agatha Christie's Jane Marple cared about St.



Mary Mead—Jalaluddin's first Kausar Khan novel is a triumph. —*John Charles*

Don't Forget Me, Little Bessie.

By James Lee Burke.

June 2025, 368p. Atlantic Monthly, \$28 (9780802164520); e-book (9780802164537).

Burke adds another story to the sprawling Holland family saga, which has more than a dozen novels spanning roughly two centuries. In 1914, 14-year-old Bessie Holland's family is in jeopardy: the oil companies are rampaging through Texas, buying up land and destroying livelihoods. With an impetuous brother and an alcoholic father—Hackberry Holland, a familiar fellow to the author's fans—Bessie is the family's voice of reason, its stable anchor. When Bessie kills a man in defense of her father, she's forced to leave Texas. The world in which she finds herself, the world of New York gangsters and unexpected dangers, will force her to grow up faster than a young girl should have to. But Bessie Holland is strong and capable, and not the sort to let the world beat her down. Reading a new Holland story is slipping back into a world that is instantly familiar. But familiarity with the previous Holland novels is not required: each can be read as a stand-alone. This is a perfect opportunity to meet the Hollands, if you haven't done so already. —*David Pitt*

★ Don't Let Him In.

By Lisa Jewell.

June 2025, 384p. Atria, \$29.99 (9781668033876); e-book (9781668033890).

Meet Nick Radcliffe: tall, handsome, successful—everything Nina needs, a year after her husband's unexpected death. She's been struggling, alongside her daughter Ash. But Nick has secrets, apparently. We learn this before Nina begins to suspect: the author gives the reader a broader perspective, letting us see Nick when he's not with Nina . . . when he's not the man he's pretending to be. Meanwhile, a florist and mother is dealing with her own list of revelations about the man she married and thought she could trust. Jewell is on a hot streak, with one brilliant thriller after another: *The Night She Disappeared* (2021), *The Family Remains* (2022), *None of this is True* (2023), even her Marvel Crime novel *Breaking the Dark* (2024). Her fans will be lining up to read this new novel (libraries should stock multiple copies), but it's also a perfect introduction for new readers to the author's brand of storytelling. As tantalizingly labyrinthine as her stories are, it's the way she anchors them in a recognizably real world, and populates them with abundantly human characters, that makes them so successful. In a genre full of top-flight authors, she ranks very near the absolute top. —*David Pitt*



HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: Jewell has become a multi-time best-seller with her sensational thrillers.

Don't Open Your Eyes.

By Liv Constantine.

June 2025, 352p. Bantam, \$30 (9780593875209); e-book (9780593875216).

When Annabelle Reynolds hears the phrase, "May all your dreams come true," it resonates like a curse, not a blessing. Annabelle's dreams are nightmares, and they do have an alarming track record. Some foreshadow mishaps involving her husband James and daughters Scarlett and Olivia; others involve visions of herself in the arms of another man or with James' hands clenched murderously around her throat. Insofar as she can get anyone to heed her warnings, crises are usually avoided, but the near misses are straining her fragile marriage. When Scarlett is seriously injured in a hit-and-run accident, secrets Annabelle thought she had buried deeply in her past come to light, and her suburban-perfect world devolves into a hellscape where cyberstalking, kidnapping, and revenge rule. As a taut example of the psychological suspense genre, Constantine's latest domestic thriller delights with whipsaw twists revealed from both Annabelle's and Scarlett's perspectives. Breakneck pacing, bombshell revelations, and unpredictable outcomes orchestrated by devilishly unreliable characters coalesce in a spellbinding and satisfyingly spine-shivering read. —*Carol Haggas*

Don't Say a Word.

By David Mark.

June 2025, 224p. Severn, \$29.99 (9781448315321); e-book (9781448315338).

Traffic cop Salome Delaney is called to a road accident in Cumbria, England. But when Sal arrives, the car is empty, and she stumbles across a bleeding figure that has clearly been brutally tortured. Thus begins one of the most horrifying cases Sal has ever encountered, all while she juggles caring for her ex-boyfriend's two girls, working for a vindictive boss, helping her friends who have just been released from prison, and fighting her own demons from an abusive childhood. But Sal's determined, and she eventually uncovers the horrific, tragic, complicated, and shocking truth. This second in Mark's Sal Delaney series (after *When the Bough Breaks*, 2024) is not for the squeamish or easily agitated or frightened, or those who are unsettled by brutal violence. And those who haven't read the first in the series may occasionally find it challenging to follow the plot, as it's filled with allusions to characters and events that took place in that book. But for fans of dark, depraved, shiver-inducing horror stories with plenty of diabolical twists, this could be just the ticket. —*Emily Melton*

El Dorado Drive.

By Megan Abbott.

June 2025, 368p. Putnam, \$30 (9780593084960); e-book (9780593084977).

Edgar Award-winner Abbott (*Beware the Woman*, 2018; also author of *Dare Me*, 2012; and showrunner of its TV adaptation) strikes

gold again with this taut, suspenseful story of Harper, a down-on-her-luck Detroit woman who, on the recommendation of her sisters, joins an exclusive investment group called the Wheel. It seems too good to be true: for a (relatively) small financial investment, she will eventually receive a considerably greater sum of money from the women-run company that stresses values of sisterhood and female empowerment. She and her sisters have been hard-up for a while, and so she joins them. But while Harper worries about a pyramid scheme, she soon discovers something altogether darker is behind the group. Abbott continues her study of noir themes and imagery in a suburban setting. The family dynamic is irresistible (Harper's sisters are better off than she is, but none of them are exactly thriving), the story is subtly unnerving, and, as Harper is drawn ever deeper into the Wheel, the tension is stomach-knottingly palpable. Another top-flight thriller from a genre master. —*David Pitt*

HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: Cult-favorite turned crime genre A-lister Abbott comes through with yet another suspenseful read.

The English Masterpiece.

By Katherine Reay.

June 2025, 352p. Harper Muse, paper, \$18.99 (9781400347278).

Lily loves her job as an assistant to formidable Diana Gilden at the Tate Gallery. Lily is secretly a budding artist who has studied and copied the styles of some of the top painters. She knows them well enough that when Diana sets up an exhibit to honor the recently deceased Picasso, Lily shocks the museum's visitors by claiming that Picasso's *Woman Laughing* is a forgery. Her claim disrupts the exhibition and threatens both Diana's and her jobs. Bad becomes worse when Lily, herself, is accused of being the forger, and she has to find the culprit and save her reputation. The story is told alternatively from Lily and Diana's viewpoints as the reader slowly learns who is behind the paintings and the cover-up. Reay weaves these details of the protagonists' backstories into the unfolding plot. The suspense builds as Lily digs around in the archives and confronts wealthy collectors and museum officials in search of the truth in this fascinating look behind the scenes of art dealings and the workings of the museum. —*Candace Smith*

Etiquette for Lovers and Killers.

By Anna Fitzgerald Healy.

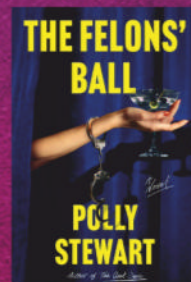
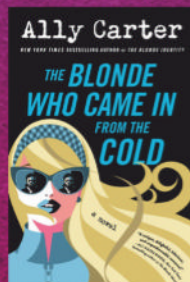
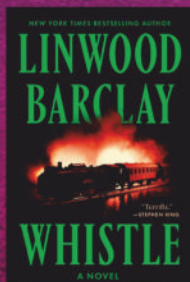
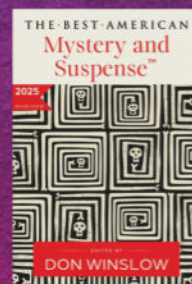
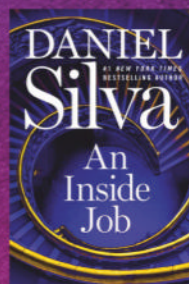
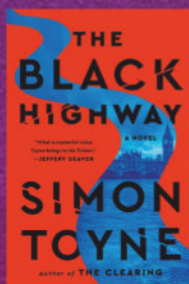
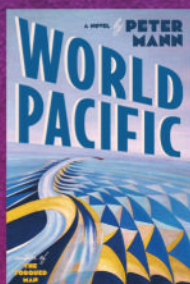
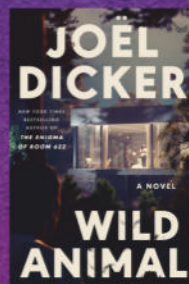
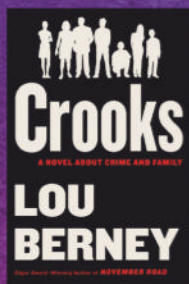
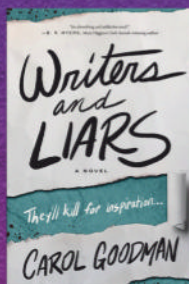
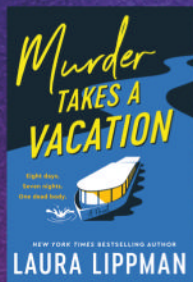
July 2025, 304p. Putnam, \$29 (9780593719633); e-book (9780593719657).

Nothing ever happens in Eastport. Lanquishing in her grandparents' home, harvesting rejection letters from museums, and wasting her freshly issued college degree in cultural linguistics by working as a seamstress, Billie McCadie fantasizes about life beyond her dreary coastal Maine village. A chance encounter with Avery Webster, scion of a local founding family, leads to an invitation to a summer soiree

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May 1 & 15, 2025 • Booklist • 49

at Webster Cottage, breaking the rule against fraternization between townies and summer folk. Even though it's the mid-1960s, there's a Gatsby-esque vibe: champagne cocktails, liveried butlers, and girls flaunting their flapper flair. Billie's about to leave when she discovers Gertrude Taylor's bloodied body splayed across the damask sofa. After Billie receives love letters intended for Gertrude, including not one but two engagement rings, she's ensnared in a crime that will claim two more bodies before it's resolved, while her growing affair with Avery continues to break cultural taboos. Demonstrating an impressive mastery of the genre, Healy's sharp, cozy mystery debut sparkles with snazzy dialogue, vibrant characters, and clever period details. —*Carol Haggas*

FDR Drive.

By James Comey.

May 2025. 336p. Mysterious, \$30 (9781613166444); e-book (9781613166451).

In the third Nora Carleton novel, the federal prosecutor takes on what could be her biggest challenge yet: to prove, in a court of law, that some speech is not protected by the Constitution—that words themselves could, under some circumstances, constitute a crime. That's an important (and extremely timely) issue, but this is no weighty legal tome. Like the first two Carleton novels, *Central Park West* (2023) and *Westport* (2024), this is an exceedingly well written, perfectly paced thriller. Its subject matter, right-wing extremism and domestic terrorism, is most definitely ripped from the headlines, but Comey isn't interested in sensationalism or facile solutions to big problems—this is a subtle and thematically complex novel. Nora continues to be a strong series anchor, a woman with an intense sense of right and wrong and the strength to take on powerful enemies in the pursuit of justice. Fans of John Grisham or Scott Turow should check out the Nora Carleton novels, if they haven't already. —*David Pitt*

The Felons' Ball.

By Polly Stewart.

July 2025. 240p. Harper, \$27.99 (9780063412064); e-book (9780063412088).

Family secrets unravel in Stewart's (*The Good Ones*, 2023) second slow-burn thriller. Natalie Macready's family has always been known for the Felons' Ball they hold each year for her father Trey's birthday, but things take a dark turn when Ben Marsh, Trey's best friend and Natalie's secret lover, is found brutally murdered at this year's celebration. As Natalie searches to discover who would have wanted the affable local figure dead, everything her family has been trying to hide starts to come to the surface. While Natalie is faced with the dilemma of whether to protect those she holds dear, relationships with her parents and sisters implode. Setting the story in her home state of Virginia, Stewart has done a great job of creating a compelling and atmospheric Southern mystery. Natalie is a flawed but well-intentioned and loyal protagonist,

and the relationships between characters are layered and genuine. Fans of Liane Moriarty's *Apples Never Fall* (2021) will enjoy this book's overarching themes regarding family loyalty, and subtle twists will hold readers' interest through the end. —*Elizabeth Reiser*



Fox.

By Joyce Carol Oates.

June 2025. 640p. Hogarth, \$32 (9780593978085); e-book (9780593978108).

Francis Fox is every parent's, school official's, and small-town cop's worst nightmare. He's a wily creature, having narrowly avoided prison after a former student whom he was sexually



abusing died by suicide. But Fox has adopted a new name, a new identity, and landed a new position as a middle-school English teacher at a prestigious South Jersey private school. To her credit, Langhorne Academy's headmistress thought there was something off about Fox, but he was just so darned charming. The students worship him, especially Genevieve, Mary Ann, and Eunice, the ones he calls "kitten," whom he ushers into his office after hours and plies with drug-laced cookies. When Fox's car is found in a remote, marshy ravine, his body nearly unrecognizable, and the cause of death is inconclusive, the community reels. Was it an accident, suicide, or murder? The investigation rocks this insulated enclave to its core. Oates owns the realm of genre-fluid fiction that focuses on the physical and psychological vulnerabilities of young women. Her latest foray explores the disturbing and chilling milieu of pedophilia from the viewpoints of predator and prey, protector and victim, exposing how easily people can be misled and the devastating consequences of misplaced trust. Menacing, mesmerizing, and thoroughly provocative. —*Carol Haggas*

YA: *With sensitivity to teens' vulnerability and uncertainty, Oates' exploration of the upending of the student-teacher balance of power is an unsettling but meaningful read. CH.*



The Ghostwriter.

By Julie Clark.

June 2025. 368p. Sourcebooks/Landmark, \$27.99 (9781464221286); e-book (9781464221293).

After her mother left, Olivia Dumont was raised by her father, Vincent, who was often cruel and distant. His behavior confused and angered Olivia, although she understood it was an inevitable result of his brother and sister being stabbed to death in 1975. Some even accused Vincent of the crime. After being banished to boarding school in Europe, Olivia eventually becomes a successful ghostwriter. She finally returns to America, but after she publicly accuses another ghostwriter of misogyny, no publisher will

work with her. Then her agent calls to say Vincent wants Olivia to ghostwrite his memoirs. She arrives at Vincent's house only to learn he's terminally ill and deteriorating quickly. Vincent is by turns brusque, confused, and intense, and the notes he gives Olivia are incoherent ramblings. Olivia knows she'll never be able to write the book unless she interviews those who knew her dad earlier and tries to discover the truth of what happened that fateful night in 1975. As she unravels the story, she begins to understand the horrific impact it had not just on her father but on the entire family, including Olivia herself. Dark, enigmatic, suspenseful, complex, thought provoking, and heart wrenching, this book is a riveting, five-star read. —*Emily Melton*



Going Home in the Dark.

By Dean Koontz.

May 2025. 395p. Amazon/Thomas & Mercer, \$28.95 (9781662500534); e-book (9781662500527).

The new novel by the author of *The House at the End of the World* (2023), *The Forest of Lost Souls* (2024), and the remarkable Jane Hawk series is simultaneously typical Koontz and something excitingly new.

The story is vintage: three people, successful in their own fields, return to their small-town home to visit a mutual friend who has fallen into a coma. They're not too worried: when they were growing up in Maple Grove, people would often slip into comas, and then awaken as if nothing had happened. At least, that's what our protagonists remember—but memory, they're about to discover, is a slippery thing, and sometimes it's best to leave some things unremembered. It's a gripping, highly suspenseful story, but it's also rather playful: the author frequently speaks directly to the reader (inside square brackets) to clarify a word, a phrase, or a scene we've just read. It's not quite metafiction—we're still meant to take the story seriously—but it does give the proceedings a very interesting and unique flavor. Even after a career that stretches back to the late 1960s, Koontz is still experimenting, still finding new ways to please his audience. A rousing success. —*David Pitt*



HIGH-DEMAND BACKLIST: Dean

Koontz has built a widespread, dedicated following with consistent best-sellers.

Happy Wife.

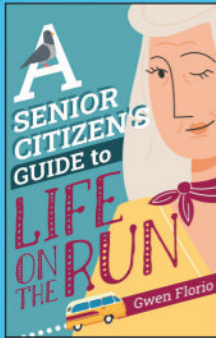
By Meredith Lavender and Kendall Shores.

June 2025. 320p. Bantam, \$30 (9780593974377); e-book (9780593974384).

Nora's life turned into a fairy tale when she married Will Somerset. From a gorgeous lake-front mansion to endless yoga classes, she wants for nothing. That all changes on the night of Will's forty-sixth birthday, when he goes missing. She must discover what happened that night—as no one makes a better suspect than a much younger second wife like Nora. Lavender and Shores have created a fun soap opera

MURDER, MISCHIEF & MAYHEM

Coming Soon from Severn House



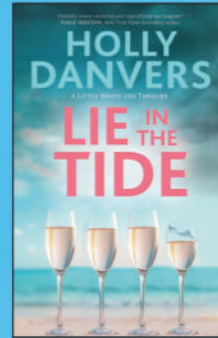
COZY MYSTERY
9781448313587
May 6, 2025



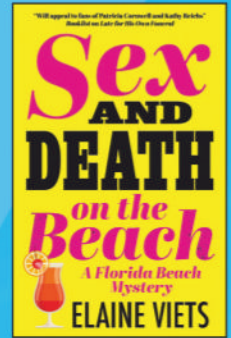
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May 6, 2025



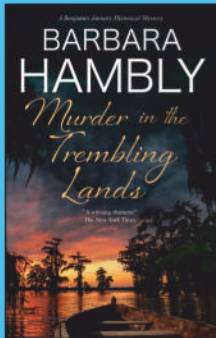
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9781448315307
May 6, 2025



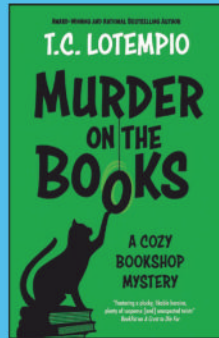
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June 3, 2025



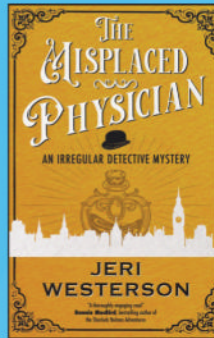
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June 3, 2025



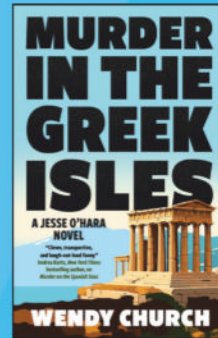
HISTORICAL CRIME
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July 1, 2025



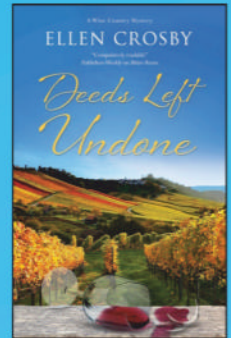
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July 1, 2025



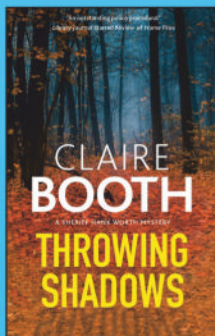
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July 1, 2025



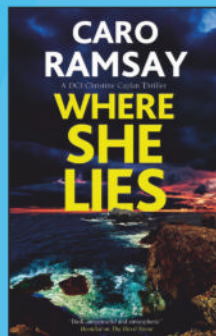
MYSTERY
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August 5, 2025



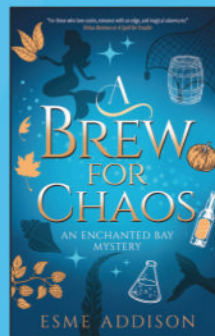
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August 5, 2025



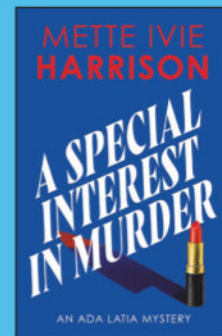
MYSTERY
9781448313884
August 5, 2025



THRILLER
9781448314096
August 5, 2025



COZY MYSTERY
9781448312634
September 2, 2025



MYSTERY
9781448316434
September 2, 2025

Top 10 Mysteries & Thrillers

The most skilled, suspenseful, and overall memorable mysteries and thrillers reviewed in *Booklist* over the past year confront dangers ranging from matters of the heart to global conflict, all with addictive suspense and superlative writing. —Annie Bostrom

All This and More. By Peng Shepherd. Morrow, \$30 (9780063278974).

Shepherd's speculative thriller combines a fascinating cast of characters with a can't-miss idea—a reality show that allows contestants to try out different versions of their lives.

Bad Liar. By Tami Hoag. Dutton, \$30 (9781101985434).

Hoag perfectly captures the dark, steamy atmosphere of the Louisiana bayous and the claustrophobia of small-town life in this five-star read with a sucker-punch ending.

Beautiful Ugly. By Alice Feeney. Flatiron, \$28.99 (9781250337788).

Feeney mixes gothic atmosphere on a remote Scottish island with two possibly unreliable narrators, a woman who may or may not be dead, and a plot that delivers suspense like an IV drip.

The Bitter Truth. By Shanora Williams. Dafina, \$17.95 (9781496745828).

A wealthy heiress uncovers the truth about her calculating politician husband in Williams' chilling, breathlessly paced, and twisty thriller.

Cross My Heart. By Megan Collins. Atria, \$28.99 (9781668048078).

Heart-transplant recipient Rosie bonds with her donor's widowed husband, and as the two grow closer, readers will wonder if they're both falling in love, or if one of them is falling into a trap.

Guide Me Home. By Attica Locke. Little, Brown/Mulholland, \$29 (9780316494618).

Through pivotal character evolution and a baffling mystery, Locke confronts the injustices surrounding missing and murdered Black women and the tempting dangers of predatory business interests.

The Human Scale. By Lawrence Wright. Knopf, \$30 (9780593537831).

A compassionate, riveting, and profoundly insightful thriller that reveals the deep trauma of Israelis, the brutality of the Israeli occupation, the fury and despair of Palestinians, and the convictions that stoke and sanctify perpetual violence.

Presumed Guilty. By Scott Turow. Grand Central, \$30 (9781538706367).

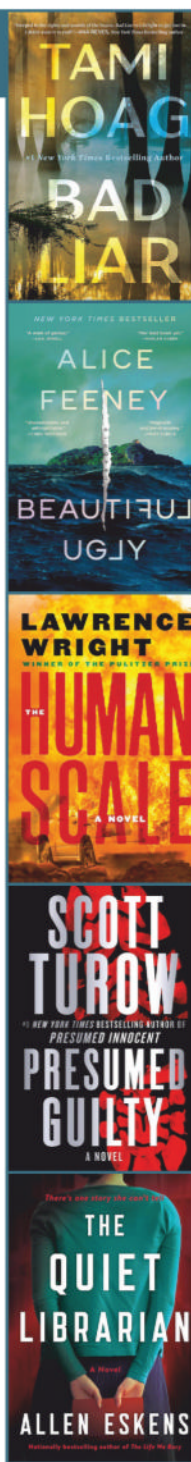
The final Rusty Sabich novel is a master class in legal suspense, weaving together the devastation of two families, simmering racial prejudice, and the impact of small-town politics within a framework of deliciously tense courtroom dynamics.

The Quiet Librarian. By Allen Eskens. Little, Brown/Mulholland, \$29 (9780316566315).

Eskens' intense and emotional story about Hana, who fled Bosnia 30 years ago, will make readers contemplate their definition of justice and the decisions humans make when trapped in terrible situations.

We Solve Murders. By Richard Osman. Viking, \$30 (9780593653227).

In this screwball comedy-mystery that features a merry band of sleuths and criminals chasing one another around the world, reluctant senior-citizen detective Steve Wheeler is forced to give up his staid life to help his beloved daughter-in-law.



of a debut novel that unfolds in two timelines. Nora shows herself to be a subtly unreliable narrator who starts off seeming a bit vapid but who experiences growth throughout the book. Though most of the other characters could use more development, Nora's best friend Este is a breath of fresh (albeit sarcastic) air and adds humor to the story. The authors also do a nice job of bringing the setting of Winter Park, Florida, to life, as it is almost a character on its own. Fans of the *Real Housewives* franchises will be amused by this mystery and the gossipy melodrama it contains. —Elizabeth Reiser

★ **He's to Die For.**
By Erin Dunn.

June 2025. 320p. Minotaur, paper, \$18 (9781250360625); e-book (9781250360632).

As the youngest homicide detective in the New York City Police Department, Rav Trivedi knows he has a lot to prove to his fellow cops. It doesn't help matters with some of his co-



workers that Rav is the very personification of a posh, upper-crust Brit. So when Rav's boss hands him the Richard Vanderford murder case, Rav is determined to show everyone exactly how good he is at solving crimes.

While there is certainly no shortage of people who wanted the music executive dead, all preliminary evidence points to Jack Vale, the lead singer in the New Knickerbockers. The only problem is that immediately upon meeting Jack, Rav doesn't want to interrogate the sexy singer, he wants to date him. With plenty of panache and great precision, Dunn skillfully creates a work of romantic suspense by walking the line between an intriguing procedural mystery in the manner of Ed McBain's 87th Precinct books and a sizzling romance à la Casey McQuiston's *Red, White, & Royal Blue* (2019), all while writing with a sense of dry wit so sharp it could be considered a weapon in its own right. —John Charles

The House on Buzzards Bay.
By Dwyer Murphy.

June 2025. 288p. Viking, \$30 (9780593833179); e-book (9780593833186).

This bunch of college pals used to be tight, but as in many groups from that time of life, they drifted apart as they eased out of youth and into adulthood. Now they're reuniting for a much-needed summer vacation at the house on Buzzards Bay, Massachusetts, where they used to spend so much time. But something's different now. . . . Something is wrong. One of the friends vanishes; somebody is breaking into vacation homes in the area; and at least one of the group has a growing feeling that something awful is about to happen. The new novel by the author of *An Honest Living*, 2022, and *The Stolen Coast*, 2023, is extremely well-crafted—it's not just the superb writing but also the structure of the story, which grabs the reader from the opening paragraphs and keeps them constantly on their toes, trying to figure

out what's going on, and becoming increasingly concerned for the safety of these beautifully constructed characters. Murphy outdoes himself here, spectacularly. —David Pitt

★ **I Did Warn Her.** By Sian Gilbert.

June 2025. 384p. Morrow, paper, \$19.99 (9780063388505); e-book (9780063388512).

The glamorous superyacht *Ophelia* sets sail across the Atlantic for its final trip of the season, as directed by two absurdly wealthy businessmen, with a crew sworn to confidentiality and ready to adhere to their every whim. The crew's newest member, Sasha, took the last-minute opening for a stewardess to flee her previous job as a nurse but soon realizes this is no paradise vacation. Seemingly petty drama among the five stunningly gorgeous and weirdly identical other stewardesses and fellow crew members quickly escalates when Sasha discovers a body in the water. Shifting points of view for each chapter create a fast pace as readers discover more salacious gossip and even more possible motives for murder—and become totally incapable of not reading the next chapter. Characters are quick to jump to conclusions, but the truth takes many twists and turns before it slowly comes to light. Gilbert intertwines multiple backstories, all converging in one sensational storyline. The murder-mystery mashup of Hercule Poirot-meets-*Below Deck* plus superyacht vacation vibes and a writing style similar to Lucy Foley's make this a perfectly juicy summer read. —Kristen Shaw



Ink Ribbon Red. By Alex Pavesi.

July 2025. 320p. Holt, \$28.99 (9781250755957); e-book (9781250755964).

Anatol invites five of his oldest friends to his home in the English countryside for a weekend to celebrate his thirtieth birthday. Each of these friends comes to the event somewhat suspicious of Anatol, whose family fortune is seemingly in peril after his father's untimely death. Over the weekend, they begin playing a dark game called Motive Method Death, for which each writes a story depicting the murder of each player by the hand of another, and the group votes to decide the winner. As the game unfolds, it becomes clear that Anatol may have had a more sinister reason for bringing them together and that some of them are hiding secrets of their own. The title, *Ink Ribbon Red*, symbolizes fictional death as the novel blends the characters' written stories and real-life events. The result is a mystery that feels inspired by Agatha Christie but leaves both the characters and the reader feeling somewhat off-kilter, never quite sure where fiction ends and reality begins. —Margaret Howard

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Top 10 Debut Mysteries & Thrillers

These ten stellar debuts, reviewed from May 1, 2024, through April 1 & 15, 2025, introduce antiheroes to root for, lament societal failings, explore haunted locales and psyches, and spotlight ten crime fiction writers to watch. —Annie Bostrom

Bright and Tender Dark. By Joanna Pearson. Bloomsbury, \$28.99 (9781639732890).

Pearson's smart, assured debut is set in the college town of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, where the brutal murder of a bright young student in 1999 still haunts her former roommate two decades later.

Coram House. By Bailey Seybolt. Atria, \$28.99 (9781668057001).

Part gothic novel set in a creepy Vermont orphanage and part investigative-reporting procedural, Seybolt's absorbing blend of true crime with fiction will both disturb and fascinate readers.

The Library Thief. By Kuchenga Shenjé. Hanover Square, \$29.99 (9781335909695).

In Victorian London, a bookbinder who has a secret of her own is hired to work in a crumbling library, where she'll uncover hidden truths that will forever change her life and viewpoint.

The Many Lies of Veronica Hawkins. By Kristina Pérez. Pegasus, \$27.95 (9781639367719).

This story of an American living in Hong Kong who memorializes a friend in a book that becomes an instant, global best-seller is a dark, disturbing, and suspenseful must-read about identity, deception, and ambition.

The Night of Baba Yaga. By Akira Otani. Tr. by Sam Bett. Soho, \$27.95 (9781641294911).

Shindo lives an anonymous and violent existence when she's hired to guard a Yakuza boss' daughter, or else, in this literary genre-bender that will appeal to fans of fairy-tale adaptations, vigilante-justice thrillers, and queer crime fiction.

Our Kind of Game. By Johanna Copeland. Harper, \$30 (9780063329683).

This riveting, suspenseful, nightmarish story of women who help their abusive partners "move on" is filled with dark twists as it highlights the simmering resentment of women who feel undervalued—and the lengths they'll go to for their children.

Ruth Run. By Elizabeth Kaufman. Penguin Press, \$29 (9780593832646).

Brilliant and morally ambiguous cybercriminal Ruth and the federal agent who's been tracking her for years deal with madcap circumstances and ethical dilemmas in this fresh thriller in which every character's motives and methods are equally up for debate.

Seraphim. By Joshua Perry. Melville, \$18.99 (9781685891138).

This legal procedural by a former New Orleans public defender introduces a seemingly hopeless juvenile case, complete with sadistic police, uncaring judges, and gridlocked social services, with the kind of detail only hard-won by experience.

Things Don't Break on Their Own. By Sarah Easter Collins. Crown, \$28 (9780593798331).

A woman meets someone who reminds her of the sister who disappeared when she was a teenager, setting off a cataclysmic cycle of events in this gripping book about families, loyalty, lies, and love both heartwarming and horrifying.

The Undercurrent. By Sarah Sawyer. Zibby, \$27.99 (9781958506448).

Exploring the complex trials and tribulations of motherhood, Sawyer's taut and emotional dual-timeline domestic suspense novel introduces the loyalties, sacrifices, longings, and ambitions of three women, and the difficult choices they're forced to make.



Booklist Essentials

Jane Austen-Inspired Mysteries

by Biz Hyzy



Art from *A Most Agreeable Murder*.

Those who revel in cozy mysteries know that a clever hook carries an irresistible charm. And what hook could be more intriguing, yet more palatable to our delicate sensibilities, than a detective novel showcasing one of Jane Austen's very own heroines or a setting in the genteel countryside society of her era? Although readers have taken pleasure in P. D. James' *Death Comes to Pemberley* since 2011, recent years have seen a marked increase in other crime novels and series led by bold young women navigating the Regency world, cozies best enjoyed with a scone and spot of tea.

Act like a Lady, Think like a Lord. By Celeste Connally. 2023. Minotaur, \$27 (9781250867551).

When Lady Petra attends a springtime ball, peers report that her friend, Gwen, is dead, but a footman suggests otherwise. When Lady Petra arranges to meet the footman to learn more, she finds his body and herself threatened. Don't miss Connally's *All's Fair in Love and Treachery* (2024) and *Revenge, Served Royal*, out this November.

The Benevolent Society of Ill-Mannered Ladies. By Alison Goodman. 2023. Berkley, \$19 (9780593440810).

Forty-two-year-old spinster Lady Augusta "Gus" Colebrook and her widowed twin sister decide to rescue their friend's goddaughter from her villainous husband. When their carriage is attacked by a highwayman whom Gus accidentally shoots and injures, she recognizes him as a roguish acquaintance from her past. The story continues in *The Ladies Road Guide to Utter Ruin* (2025).

Jane and the Final Mystery. By Stephanie Barron. 2023. Soho, \$27.95 (9781641295055).

This series starring Jane Austen as a detective launched in 1996; this is the fifteenth and final volume. Set in 1817, the year of the real Austen's death, the story follows

Jane as she tries to prove the innocence of a schoolboy accused of murder before she is overcome by her declining health.

Miss Austen Investigates: The Hapless Milliner. By Jessica Bull. 2024. Sterling/Union Square, \$18.99 (9781454951803).

This witty mystery also sees Jane Austen sleuthing out a killer, this time to protect the primary suspect: her younger brother, Georgy, who was found with the deceased's jewelry. The *Miss Austen Investigates* series continues in *A Fortune Most Fatal* (2025).

A Most Agreeable Murder. By Julia Seales. 2023. Random House, \$27 (9780593449981).

In Swampshire, an English village filled with frogs and quirky characters, Beatrice Steele struggles to hide her obsession with true crime. When an eligible bachelor croaks during a ball, Beatrice solves the absurd, locked-room crime alongside handsome Detective Vivek Drake.

Murder in Highbury. By Vanessa Kelly. 2024. Kensington, \$27 (9781496745972).

When Emma Knightley (née Woodhouse) happens upon the body of Augusta Elton in Highbury's church, her insatiable curiosity leads her to discover the possible murder weapon among other clues. With

her husband acting as magistrate, Emma, to his chagrin, inserts herself into the investigation, using her status and charm to draw confessions out of possible suspects.

Murder in Westminster. By Vanessa Riley. 2022. Kensington, \$26 (9781496738660).

When Lady Abigail Worthing discovers her neighbor's body on her property, she knows she'll be a suspect; not only does her skin color and mother's infamy influence her reputation among the ton, she can't even reveal her alibi since she was attending a secret pro-abolition meeting at the time of the murder. Watch Lady Abigail solve more crimes in *Murder in Drury Lane* (2024) and *Murder in Berkeley Square* (2024).

The Murder of Mr. Wickham. By Claudia Gray. 2022. Vintage, paper, \$17 (9780593313817).

Juliet, the daughter of Catherine and Henry Tilney; and Jonathan, the son of Elizabeth and Fitzwilliam Darcy, team up to solve the murder of the dastardly Mr. Wickham during a dinner party attended by a cast of Austen characters, all of whom are primary suspects. The duo solves more crimes and starts to develop feelings for each other in *The Late Mrs. Willoughby* (2023) and *The Perils of Lady Catherine de Bourgh* (2024).

Pride and Premeditation. By Tirzah Price. 2021. HarperTeen, \$17.99 (9780062889805).

In this YA offering with crossover appeal, Lizzie Bennett yearns to become a lawyer like her father. After Mr. Bingley is accused of murder, Lizzie's father offers her an opportunity to work for him, and she leaps into action, trying to solve the case alongside the arrogant, up-and-coming Mr. Darcy. Read more in *Sense and Second-Degree Murder* (2022) and *In Want of a Suspect* (2024).

Continued from p.53

Jill Is Not Happy.

By Kaira Rouda.

June 2025. 312p. Scarlet, \$27.95 (9781613166765); paper, \$17.95 (9781613166079); e-book (9781613166086).

Jack and Jill Tingley are more fairy tale than nursery rhyme—except for a few pesky problems. A Utah road trip is just what the affluent, Californian empty nesters need, right? After all, every long-married couple has their rough patches. Jack just needs to fall in line and remember the handsome golden boy Jill fell in love with in college. *Or else.* A path more treacherous than any car ride follows, with claustrophobic tension penning Jack in. What does Jill have planned? Who is she really? Is their daughter, Maggie, in danger too? Jack desperately wants out and dreams of a future with his new love, Erica, but his coldly practical wife is always one step ahead. Jill has always wanted Jack—with maybe a little petty theft on the side. She's made sure she'll keep her partner in crime no matter what. Rouda (*The Favorite Daughter*, 2019) makes Jill a genuinely chilling narrator. Though Jack and Jill's story goes tumbling down the hill, leaving questions unanswered and rushing the reader to a time-worn conclusion, fans of unreliably narrated thrillers will enjoy it. —*Mala Bhattacharjee*

Julie Tudor Is Not a Psychopath.

By Jennifer Holdich.

July 2025. 320p. Sourcebooks/Landmark, paper, \$17.99 (9781464229763); e-book (9781464229787).

In the opening pages of this darkly comic novel, Julie is trying to determine how best to maneuver the body of her romantic partner, the clearly incapacitated Sean, around her house, including attempting to lever him with a homemade (and unsuccessful) pulley system. Immediately following this singular introduction, the story jumps back in time to months prior, when Julie and Sean are colleagues in unremarkable corporate jobs. While Julie harbors strong feelings towards Sean, their romantic future is thrown into jeopardy when a new employee starts in their department: the lovely Xanthe. Told completely through Julie's deluded perspective, the book shows readers not only Julie's obsession with Sean but her previous romantic fixations and the increasingly unhinged lengths she goes to secure the objects of her affection. Part of the entertainment and humor of this offbeat story rests in Julie's biting interior monologue and her complete lack of self-awareness. Moments of true connection with a neighbor's son provide glimmers of who Julie could be in a parallel universe, but in this one she remains a psychopath and a stalker to the end. —*Halle Carlson*

Kill Your Darlings.

By Peter Swanson.

June 2025. 288p. Morrow, \$30 (9780063433625); e-book (9780063433649).

Wendy is seriously thinking about murdering her husband. She and Thom have grown so far apart that they've remained married just out

of habit . . . and out of a shared tragedy. How did they get to this point? And is there any way to resolve the tension except with one of them dying? Swanson's latest novel is, structurally, his most ambitious: the story is told backwards, starting in the present day and moving back through time, revealing hidden truths, lies, and the one terrible secret Wendy and Thom share, the terrible thing that has kept them together for all these decades. Like in Gillian McAllister's *Wrong Place Wrong Time*, 2022, Swanson picks his back-in-time moments carefully: each time we see Wendy and Thom, we see them at a key moment in their relationship; and, as their past opens up to us, we slowly see a tragic

picture developing. With a pair of deeply engaging characters, a unique story structure, and a powerhouse of an ending, the book is a sure-fire hit. —*David Pitt*

King of Ashes.

By S. A. Cosby.

June 2025. 352p. Flatiron/Pine & Cedar, \$28.99 (9781250832061); e-book (9781250832078).

Roman Carruthers did it. He got out. He left the dying town of Jefferson Run, Virginia, and he built himself a prosperous life making money for other people. When he learns that his father is in a coma after a car accident, he flies home immediately to find a family in

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disarray: a sister who's become obsessed with the long-ago disappearance of their mother, and a brother who's deep in debt to some very bad people. Can Roman somehow find a way to bring peace to his family, even as his father lies dying? Cosby has published one magnificent crime novel after another, beginning with 2019's *My Darkest Prayer*, and this new book spotlights the author's gift for building complex characters. It also continues his exploration of the dark places humans keep hidden within us. His dialogue, too, is pitch-perfect: colloquial and idiomatic, reflecting the education and upbringing of his characters—it feels like we're eavesdropping on real people. A stunning novel. —*David Pitt*



HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: Cosby's rural southern noir mysteries have become consistent best-sellers, and this one comes out in time for beach read season.

Lie in the Tide.

By Holly Danvers.

June 2025. 240p. Severn, \$29.99 (9781448315987); e-book (9781448316687).

Four women who were best friends in high school agree to meet on Cape Cod for a reunion. They haven't seen one another for over 20 years, and there's a lot of catching up to do. Avery is now a farmer's wife living in Iowa, Calista is married and wealthy, Remi and her husband, Gabe, own a gym in Florida and are trying for a baby, and Mori is a famous writer of steamy romance novels. When Calista doesn't arrive as expected, the three other women grow increasingly worried. Then they find her body washed up on the beach. Devastated, the survivors agree to play amateur sleuths, but their investigation leads to the revelation of numerous dark and troubling secrets. The women realize that each of them has been living with lies both big and small. Their "perfect, happy lives" are a myth, and some of those lies are what led to Calista's death. With glitz and glamor, vivid characters, tragedy, misplaced trust, and one final, shocking revelation, this mystery is also about friendship and loyalty and the damage that lies can do. —*Emily Melton*

London Particular.

By Christianna Brand.

June 2025. 288p. Poisoned Pen, paper, \$15.99 (9781464237584).

The 125th entry in the British Library Crime Classics series starts with an excerpt from *Bleak House* about impenetrable fog. It's this kind of fog, known as a "London Particular" at the time of this mystery's original publication in 1952, that turns an assault into a murder. The man, a Belgian visitor to an upper-class London home, makes a phone call to the office of the households' family doctor crying out that he's been bludgeoned with a mallet. By the time the doctor arrives, the home's foyer is filled with the visitor's blood, a surgical instrument abandoned next to his body. Brand informs the reader that seven possible murderers are within one mile of the house. Brand's

recurring detective Inspector Cockrill takes on the case, searching through motives and whereabouts until the satisfyingly shocking last line of the book. While the puzzle behind the mallet murder and Cockrill's assembly of the pieces works well, far too much time is spent in dilatory dialog and description. For fans of the series. —*Connie Fletcher*

The Lost Masterpiece.

By B. A. Shapiro.

June 2025. 448p. Algonquin, \$29 (9781643756370); e-book (9781643756394).

Skeptical and flinty Tamara Rubin, working for a biotech startup in Boston, is incensed by what she assumes are scam calls from the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, but soon her life is upended by staggering new information about her family tree and a glorious painting by Édouard Manet hanging in her apartment. Cherished by her nineteenth-century French ancestors, *Party on the River Seine* was stolen by the Nazis. As Tamara's ownership of this priceless "lost masterpiece" is quickly challenged by a diabolical adversary in Paris, she becomes strangely bewitched by it, especially its portrayal of Manet's peer, the painter Berthe Morisot. In her latest smart and entrancing, art-inspired thriller, Shapiro parallels Tamara's battle to protect her inheritance with Berthe's struggles for autonomy as a brilliant artist shackled by harsh gender and class restrictions. Tamara and Berthe are intense and intrepid women in two very different worlds, united by blood and art, a connection Shapiro infuses with supernatural elements as she orchestrates acts of passion, daring, and determination, mixing compelling art history with zesty fabrication, full-blown romance, and cleverly devised suspense. —*Donna Seaman*

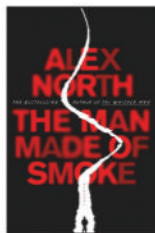


The Man Made of Smoke.

By Alex North.

May 2025. 320p. Macmillan/Celadon, \$27.99 (9781250757890); e-book (9781250757913).

The serial killer known as the Pied Piper is a man made of smoke. But in an eerie encounter, 12-year-old Dan Garvie did see him with one of his victims, and in a state of confusion, did nothing. It has haunted him ever since. He now works as a criminal profiler, having dedicated his life to seeking justice as a sort of penance. When his father is reported to have died by suicide, he returns to his childhood home on an isolated island. Dan's curious investigating leads him back to the Piper, who had long since been found dead—but now someone seems to be killing off all of the people involved in his last known appearance. Some excellent misdirection on the author's part takes Dan down many paths in a brilliantly scripted game of cat and mouse. The tone is dark and foreboding, at times terrifying, and, at others, surprisingly tender and emotional. The bond between Dan



and his father is extraordinary. Despite some distance in recent years, they were profoundly bonded by the trauma of Dan's experience and still have the ability to channel each other's thoughts. A mesmerizing read, best read in a well-lit room. —*Jane Murphy*



Marble Hall Murders.

By Anthony Horowitz.

May 2025. 384p. Harper, \$28.99 (9780063305700); e-book (9780063305717).

In Horowitz's third novel featuring editor Susan Ryeland, she's back in London, having bid a fond farewell to her life in Crete after realizing she needed to re-engage with the literary life. She thought she'd made her final farewells to fictional detective Atticus Pünd and his creator, Alan Conway, but a new publisher asks her to serve as editor for a continuation of the series and she reluctantly agrees. In this outstanding "book within the book" mystery, the reader delves into the manuscript for *Pünd's Last Case*, and an intermittent narrative about Susan's dealings with self-destructive new young author, Eliot Crace, who turns out to be a handful. True to the Conway tradition, he has disguised a true crime in his novel. He is the grandson of the legendary children's author Miriam Crace, whose somewhat dodgy demise manifests itself in the book as the death of Pünd's acquaintance Margaret Chalfont. Eliot has channeled his antipathy toward his dysfunctional family into the book, and they, in turn, develop some dangerous animosity toward Susan. Both previous Ryeland novels, *Magpie Murders* (2017) and *Moonflower Murders* (2020), were adapted into dazzling PBS productions, and fans will hope this book will provide another. —*Jane Murphy*



Marguerite by the Lake.

By Mary Dixie Carter.

May 2025. 304p. Minotaur, \$28.95 (9781250790385); e-book (9781250790392).

Phoenix, raised by her grandmother, took a job at a landscape-design company after high school, gradually embracing more responsibility, including designing gardens for some of the company's high-end clients. One such client is Marguerite Gray, who, with husband Geoffrey, owns Rosecliff, a magnificent estate with equally magnificent gardens that are Marguerite's pride and joy. Phoenix is shocked but delighted when she is invited to the launch party for Marguerite's new gardening book. But at the party, a terrible storm blows up, and a giant tree falls and would have killed Geoffrey if Phoenix hadn't pulled him out of the way. Marguerite is away the next time Phoenix is working at Rosecliff, and Geoffrey invites Phoenix to share a bottle of wine. The relationship escalates, and when a tragic accident occurs, and Marguerite is out of



the picture, Phoenix moves in with Geoffrey. As things spiral out of control, awful secrets emerge, the sense of menace escalates, and Phoenix finds herself becoming increasingly paranoid, obsessed with a painting of Marguerite that seems to come alive. Readers will be mesmerized by the pulse-pounding suspense, dark twists, hypnotic plot, and cataclysmic ending of Carter's latest gothic thriller (after *The Photographer*, 2021). —*Emily Melton*

Mrs. Spy.

By M. J. Robotham.

June 2025. 352p. Bloomsbury Aria, \$28.99 (9781035914234); e-book (9781035901166).

Set in London, this smashing spy novel is not above having a bit of fun with the form. Maggie Flynn, the star of the book, is a British Intelligence snoop in her mid-forties, a single mother with a bunion that hurts like hell during foot chases, and a weight problem that would keep her from escaping through bathroom windows. Maggie and author Robotham (*The Scandalous Life of Ruby Devereaux*, 2024) slyly use the slapstick to lead readers into real lessons in tradecraft. Need to loiter unobserved? Dress like a parking attendant. But despite the tips, this is also a dead-serious espionage tale; Maggie slipped into her job after her secret-agent husband was murdered, and now, she learns that his death came because he was on the trail of something truly vile. She takes up his investigation, throwing readers

into full-blast action, loud with fights, chases, and kidnappings. Still, it's her advice to Bond and Smiley that lingers: to observe unobserved, take up knitting. —*Don Crinklaw*

A Murder for Miss Hortense.

By Mel Pennant.

June 2025. 352p. Pantheon, \$27 (9780593701621); e-book (9780593701638).

Pennant's debut is both a gripping mystery and an eye-opening portrait of life for the Jamaicans who immigrated to England as part of the Windrush generation, emphasizing the discrimination and mistreatment they suffered as well as their close community bonds. In the 1960s, a group fed up with white banks not accepting their money decided to form the Pardner, their own private investment scheme. Over time, the increasing funds could be loaned to any member and eventually to the entire Jamaican community. But there was a dark side to life then—a series of brutal rapes and murders targeting Jamaican women. Miss Hortense, head of the Pardner, a fearless retired nurse skilled at ferreting out lies and secrets, vowed to find the rapist-killer after her sister was targeted. But decades later, there's still one case Miss Hortense never solved, and she must work through a tangled web of deception, greed, and long-buried anger. Pennant perfectly captures the Jamaican patois in this quirky, witty tale with an unconventional cast of characters, a dark edge, and a satisfying ending. —*Emily Melton*

Murder Takes a Vacation.

By Laura Lippman.

June 2025. 272p. Morrow, \$30 (9780062998101); e-book (9780062998125).

With themes reminiscent of both *The Maltese Falcon* and *Charade*, widow Muriel Blossom, the assistant to Lippman's star sleuth Tess Monaghan, now has a case of her own. It all starts when Mrs. Blossom, as she prefers to be called, finds a winning lottery ticket. She decides to spend some of the money on something extravagant and books a luxurious vacation in France on a river cruise. En route, she is romanced by a charming older gentleman named Allan Turner, but after he falls "accidentally" from his hotel balcony, she meets a younger man named Danny Johnson, who attaches himself to her. It turns out that he is after a stolen antiquity that Turner was transporting and might have passed on to Mrs. B., who suddenly finds herself in a dangerous situation. A convoluted story unfolds, amidst some excellent misdirection. The challenge is to keep up as the characters day-trip their way down the Seine. This is being marketed as a beach read, but readers need to expect more noir than cozy, despite the inviting cover.

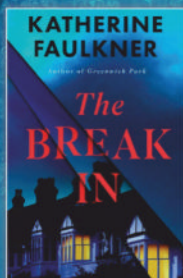
—*Jane Murphy*

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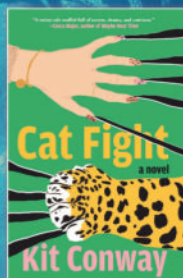
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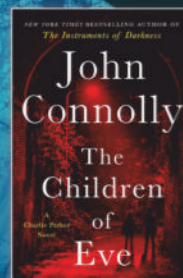
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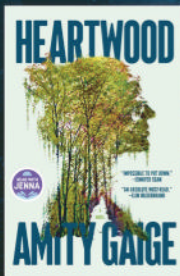
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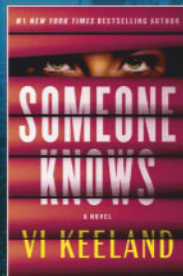
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Night Cry.

By William L. Stuart.

May 2025, 164p. Stark House, paper, \$15.95

(9798886011531).

Detective Mark Devlin of the NYPD is not someone readers will warm up to. When his girlfriend greets him with laughter, he hits her “so hard in the face with his open palm that the impact rang in the apartment.” Devlin is the main man in Stark House’s reprint of Stuart’s 1948 thriller, which emerged at the center of the emerging literary genre: the crime story. There are two common branches: hard-boiled (resolution possible) and noir (nothing good is possible). Both love darkness and rain, neon and grim goings-on, and both can strike us now as incurably romantic. Stuart seeks to spare us the romance by giving us a hard-edged detective seething with bitterness after losing a prized promotion. His attempts to hide the results of his sourness are the meat of this short novel and the writing is so rich it’s impossible to look away. Stuart is especially good on a genre staple, the city at night, when its noises are “an undercurrent, the varying sounds of the river desolate and ominous.” —*Don Crinklaw*

The Palace of Sinners and Saints.

By Ammar Merchant.

May 2025, 352p. Simon & Schuster, \$28.99

(9781668067581); e-book (9781668067604).

This astonishing debut novel introduces readers to Irfan Mirza, a freelance mercenary who hires himself out to people who need problems solved. Let other people practice diplomacy; Mirza’s solutions are of a more violent nature. A ruthless Middle Eastern dictator has been getting rid of dissidents and, generally, people who disagree with him. He has recently taken a woman who grew up with Mirza, the two of them orphans who forged a strong bond. Mirza missed a chance to rescue her during her abduction; now the woman’s being held in an ancient fortress that serves as the despot’s impregnable prison. But is any place truly impregnable to Irfan Mirza? Comparisons to the Jack Reacher novels are certainly apt (Mirza’s a big man who doesn’t shy away from violence, but whose intellect is razor sharp), but this is no imitator. Merchant has created something fresh and incredibly exciting. And the Middle Eastern setting isn’t merely window dressing: the politics, culture, and mores of the region are absolutely essential to the story. This book could really take off. —*David Pitt*

Pariah.

By Dan Fesperman.

July 2025, 368p. Knopf, \$29 (9780593802236); e-book

(9780593802243).

Fesperman, a former *Baltimore Sun* reporter who segued into novel-writing a quarter-century ago, isn’t exactly known for writing comedies, but his latest thriller has a really good sense of humor. Its central character is Hal Knight, a stand-up comic turned movie star turned (disgraced) congressman,

who’s living a mostly hermetic life on a Caribbean island, trying to keep out of the public eye after his life blew up. Imagine his surprise when the CIA comes a-calling, telling him he’s uniquely qualified for an intelligence-gathering mission to a certain Eastern European country. Turns out they’re not wrong: with his past, he’s pretty much the only guy who would do what the American government needs done. The big question is: Will Hal be able to keep his wits about him when everything around him is disintegrating? It should come as no surprise to Fesperman’s fans that this is a first-rate spy thriller; what might come as a surprise is the relative lightness of the proceedings. *Pariah* is something new for the author, and it’s a rousing success. —*David Pitt*

Plays Well with Others.

By Lauren Myracle.

June 2025, 316p. Blackstone, \$27.99 (9798874710835).

When Jake Nolan moves to the Sweetwater Bungalows, she intends to start over. In the last year, she’s had a stillborn baby, her husband left her for her best friend, and leaked personal details online made her a villain in the eyes of the world. However, Jake’s picturesque new neighborhood turns out to be anything but, and her new neighbors all hide secrets. Jake’s new friend Mabel has her own history of morally ambiguous actions, single mom Vanessa and her son, Billy, aren’t as perfect as they seem, and Wendell and Delilah are suffering from a terrible loss while trying to fit into a new school. In her adult thriller debut, best-selling YA author Myracle tells the story from various characters’ perspectives, with the mystery being how they fit together. The result is a domestic thriller about the evil that lurks right beneath the surface and what people keep hidden, even from those closest to them. Most characters are morally ambiguous, so readers looking for someone to root for may find that doing so is difficult, but fans of the genre will definitely be entertained.

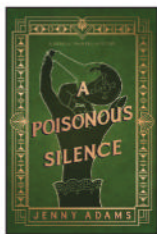
—*Stephanie Howes***A Poisonous Silence.**

By Jenny Adams.

May 2025, 320p. Crooked Lane, \$30.99 (9798892420389);

paper, \$19.99 (9798892422406); e-book (9798892420396).

Adams continues her Deadly Twenties Mystery series, which began with *A Deadly Endeavor* (2024), as Gil Lawless, recovered from his run-in with the Schuylkill Slasher, returns



to his work as a coroner’s assistant in Philadelphia. Soon he and Marco Salvatore, his partner and friend, are called to a crime scene: a man has been poisoned in his own home: was it an accident or murder? Engaged by the widow to investigate, aspiring PI Edie Shippen jumps in with her keen intelligence and determination despite Gil wanting her to stay safely tucked away at home. As the number of poisoned men increases, the suspect pool includes rival gangs and everyone

connected to Harold Fox’s Norwood Studio and current film set. Working together would make sense, and Gil’s struggle to remain disconnected from Edie might wind up costing them everything. Adams provides richly detailed descriptions of the clothing, movie sets and production, social bias and expectations, and medical issues, including the aftereffects of WWI, which give a real sense of the time and place. But it’s the charming characters and the intricately plotted mystery that will have readers ready for the next installment. A great suggestion for fans of Anne Perry, Jacqueline Winspear, Elizabeth Peters, and Rhys Bowen. —*Stacey Hayman*

Proof.

By Jon Cowan.

June 2025, 384p. Gallery, \$28.99 (9781668051139); e-book

(9781668051153).

TV veteran Cowan’s debut begins with a bang. An unknown assailant kills Rich Kaplan, law school friend of Jake West, and Jake is the primary suspect. Jake looks into the case Rich was working on and is encouraged to take the deal the DA’s office is offering defendant Tiana Walker. After Tiana proclaims her innocence, though, Jake decides not to take the deal. This angers ADA Austin Bell and Jake’s own firm’s managing partner. Then Grace, a paralegal, tells Jake that Rich had found something in Tiana’s case that could implicate one of the firm’s biggest clients. At this point, Jake recruits another law school friend, Javi, disbarred and working as a PI, to investigate the case along with Grace, detective McFadden, and ADA Bell. With a fast, edge-of-your-seat pace, *Proof* is a rollercoaster ride that fans of John Grisham and Scott Turow will enjoy. Beyond the thrills, though, *Proof* also looks at the impact of alcoholism, strained father-son relationships, and how the criminal justice system often takes advantage of the poor and powerless. Highly recommended. —*John Faria*

Return to Sender.

By Craig Johnson.

June 2025, 336p. Viking, \$30 (9780593830703); e-book

(9780593830710).

Johnson’s detective hero Walt Longmire has had a fine career—21 novels and a six-season TV show run—remarkable for someone a little bit, well, different. He uses words like “indubitably,” quotes Percy Shelley’s poetry, and educates a lazy coroner on proper autopsy procedure. And there’s no hard-boiled cynicism here. We should always, he says, “rise above the natural order of things.” But he’s a fine lawman, as a friend of his muses in the book. The mistake of anyone working against him is “confusing good with weak.” This outing has Longmire clashing with a religious cult out on the “sand anvil” of Wyoming’s Red Devil, after a mail person with a more than 300-mile route goes missing. Longmire must rescue a handful of cult victims, older folks who sought something interesting. The novel includes some lively conversations as Longmire goes under-

cover as a mail carrier following the missing woman's same route. —*Don Crinklaw*

A Senior Citizen's Guide to Life on the Run.

By **Gwen Florio**.

May 2025. 256p. Severn, \$29.99 (9781448313587); e-book (9781448313594).

Most residents at Timeless Pastures, a deteriorating retirement home in New Jersey's Pine Barrens, have a "used-to-be" that passes muster in the small talk that is the initiation to a retirement community. But not Alice—she is hiding a huge secret. Alice's neighbor Babs refers to this long-hidden truth, then disappears. When Babs is later found murdered, Alice is compelled to change her plans with friends Mia, George, and Sasha. Instead of the previously planned casual trip to a nearby cottage before they all prepare to move from their failing community, they are now on a flight to escape the new owner. Together, the four devise an elaborate strategy to get Alice safely away from New Jersey. Along the way, there are burner phones, brushes with the police, and stealthy visits to Timeless Pastures in disguise. Using narrative and police interview transcripts, Florio (*Best Be Prepared*, 2023) weaves a story about fraudulent practices, a long-standing vendetta, and the strength of friendship. Once again, she delivers a solid thriller with social commentary. —*Karen Muller*

Sex and Death on the Beach.

By **Elaine Viets**.

June 2025. 240p. Severn, \$29.99 (9781448314799); e-book (9781448316809).

Norah McCarthy, owner of the Florodora, a beachside vintage apartment building in Peerless Point, Florida, only rents to eccentric tenants. Still, she refuses to rent to annoying adult entertainment star Sammie Lant, ultimately threatening the persistent Sammie during an argument. When Sammie's body is found by plumbers digging up the Florodora's outdoor plumbing, Norah quickly becomes a suspect. When a second body that also has a connection to Norah and her family is found in the same hole, Norah investigates to clear herself, her family, and Florodora's residents. Norah, with the help of residents, interviews suspects and reviews her grandmother's journals, but not before putting herself in danger. Complicating matters, after angering a prominent local family, Norah has a visit from the local code enforcement inspector, leading to dozens of citations which must be fixed in 30 days. The lovingly described south Florida setting, the close friendships among the Florodora's well-drawn, quirky residents, the push to save the Florodora, and Norah's slowly revealed family history add up to a satisfying cozy. —*Sue O'Brien*

Shaw Connolly Lives to Tell.

By **Gillian French**.

June 2025. 352p. Minotaur, \$28 (9781250358516); e-book (9781250358523).

Crime scene fingerprint analyst Shaw Con-

nolly has been consumed by the 2007 cold case surrounding her sister, Thea, who disappeared when both girls were teens. Worse yet, Shaw is now being harassed by Anders, the man she believes to be Thea's murderer. Shaw is willing to stop at nothing to locate Thea's body and give her family closure, even adopting a retired cadaver dog. For Shaw and her father, time seems to have stopped in 2007, taking a toll on their relationships with other family members. Shaw must navigate increasingly threatening calls from Anders while also trying to keep her family from unraveling. French, an Edgar-nominated YA author, writes Shaw's character with undeniable depth

by way of witty and often humorous dialogue throughout absolute tragedy, showing the extent of human endurance. Unsettled readers will wonder how much further Shaw can be pushed before she breaks. A swift plot and constant pressure on Shaw create an enthralling mystery thriller that highlights the grip grief can have on a person. —*Kristen Shaw*

A Shipwreck in Fiji.

By **Nilima Rao**.

June 2025. 272p. Soho, \$29.95 (9781641295475); e-book (9781641295482).

Part of the appeal of the Sergeant Akal Singh mystery series (this is the second in-

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stallment, after *A Disappearance in Fiji*, 2023) is the intense “stranger in a strange land” dynamic faced by the hero. Sgt. Akal Singh is an Indian Sikh, formerly serving with the Royal Hong Kong Police, but now exiled to the Suva Constabulary in Fiji after he unwittingly met with a woman connected to a coven of burglars. Singh doesn’t fit in with the Fijians, Indians, Australians, New Zealanders, or the British, who rule the island colony. The time itself is intriguing. It’s 1915; the Brits on Fiji are trying to leave the island to join the war effort, and Germans have been sighted on a nearby island. Singh’s boss, the Inspector-General, gives him inane assignments, including escorting two European women to the island and going on a wild goose chase to discover Germans there. Singh discovers a murdered shopkeeper on the island, and must use his wits to battle the obstacles in his path. Intriguing history-mystery. —*Connie Fletcher*

★ **Sins of Survivors.**
By Joe McClean.

May 2025. 288p. Amistad, paper, \$19.99 (9780063316782); e-book (9780063316805).

The Carter brothers are the powerhouse behind Detroit’s Black Bottoms neighborhood, a bustling Great Migration haven run on Jasper’s cunning strategy and Ben’s diplomacy. In 1937, Black Bottoms is caught up in a swirl of change: rumors of a strike among Ford’s Black workers, the shake-up of the Purple Gang’s booze-running operations, and the glimmer of Black political influence. Ben’s son, Charles, runs their crown jewel, Geraldine’s nightclub, where Billie Holiday performs and booths host deal-brokers. But unbeknownst to Ben, Charles has been making deals with the loose cannon son of a Purple Gang boss, and they’re in over their heads when the Feds start investigating the disappearances of a politician who challenged the Carters’ pick and an undercover agent who was planted in their booze-running operation. Ben scrambles to hold everything together, but the only way out will blow holes in the Carter family and their empire. Veteran screenwriter McClean settles readers into Black Bottoms’ rhythms before driving the plot, creating a small world of fully realized characters before casting intrigue at breakneck speed. This debut tightens its hold by yanking heartstrings, sparking outrage, and twisting expectations; it’s a must-read for fans of Walter Mosley, George Pelecanos, and Attica Locke. —*Christine Tran*

★ **Skin and Bones: And Other Mike Bowditch Short Stories.**

By Paul Doiron.

May 2025. 368p. Minotaur, paper, \$20 (9781250382122); e-book (9781250382146).

After 15 outstanding full-length entries in the Mike Bowditch series, Doiron gifts us with

eight riveting short stories featuring the Maine game warden investigator and his supporting cast. The author explains in the introduction that the stories allowed him to flesh out the lives of his characters, including Mike’s father Jack, and connect some of the gaps between the novels. Mike’s mentor Charley, whom he calls a crafty old geezer, gets to voice a tale in “Backtrack,” where a younger him puts his all into a desperate snowstorm search for a missing hunter, even as it becomes apparent the man might not want to be found. The eponymous “Skin and Bones” channels Doiron’s inner Poe, and he takes a riff on Conan Doyle in “The Caretaker,” which features a Boston couple tooling around the wilderness in their Tesla. In “The Impostor,” Mike sort of gets to investigate his own death when he finds a dead body carrying a driver’s license with his name on it. All the stories are clever, smooth, and even, and rich with the raw beauty of backwoods Maine and its magnificent wildlife. A few of the stories, especially the opener, “Beartrap,” would make for entertaining campfire tales. —*Jane Murphy*

★ **So Happy Together.**
By Olivia Worley.

June 2025. 304p. Minotaur, \$28 (9781250372307); e-book (9781250372314).

Jane knows Colin is her soulmate. Yes, he dumped her after six dates, and yes, he is now dating Zoe, a beautiful artist. Jane just needs to give him time; he’ll come around eventually. When Jane decides to “accidentally” bump into Colin at a coffee shop, she does not expect Zoe to call Jane over and invite her to a party—to befriend her. Soon, Jane and Zoe are spending time together, making Colin uncomfortable. When Jane finds Colin in a compromising position, she believes she can finally earn his trust, and eventually, his love. How far can Jane push the boundaries of her obsession before everything falls apart? Worley’s (*The Debutantes*, 2024) newest thriller is propulsive and extremely tense. From the very beginning, Jane is obviously unstable. While the reader will eventually learn why, the revelation is timely and adds to the discombobulated tone of the entire plot. Worley is skilled at making Jane both unpredictably disturbing and empathetic. This well done addition to any thriller collection is recommended for fans of Ruth Ware, Riley Sager, and Freida McFadden. —*Carmen Clark*

★ **Spies in Plain Sight.**

By Lynn Hightower.

June 2025. Severn, \$29.99 (9781448313983); e-book (9781448313990).

Junie Lagarde returns in another suspenseful, fast-paced adventure (after *The Beautiful*

Risk, 2023). Originally from Kentucky, Junie moved to France and married Olivier, who died tragically in a plane crash. Despite her intense grief, she found love again with police captain Philippe Brevard, and the two have settled down in Annecy. Junie now runs VIE, an organization that exposes corrupt billionaires who care nothing for people or the environment; their only aim is to get richer. VIE’s latest target is Sullivan Carr, who plans to build a bitcoin mine in Annecy to increase his already astronomical wealth. Carr is furious when VIE reveals his unprincipled greed and corruption. Then a hit squad brutally murders most of the VIE staff, and Junie, sure Carr is behind the attack, vows to seek revenge. To Junie’s shock, Carr invites her to meet him at the famous Kentucky Derby. Intrigued, she accepts the invitation, which has disastrous consequences and nearly costs Junie her life. A tense, twisty thriller with vibrant characters, a timely plot, and a satisfying conclusion. —*Emily Melton*

★ **Tell Me Something Good.**
By Court Stevens.

June 2025. 400p. Harper Muse, paper, \$18.99 (9780840707413).

Court Stevens’ impressive resume includes eight YA novels, and she makes her adult debut with this intense tale. Anna Ryder finds out that her mother Starr has cancer, then loses her teaching job only a day later. Luxor, Illinois, is rural and small; Anna has no way to find work, but she must stay close to Starr. She has no choice but to cross the Ohio River where it meets the Mississippi. In Bent Tree, Kentucky, there is a compound called the Lodges. Each lodge has a different owner, but all of them are involved in a shady scheme surrounding the Royale, which is a yearly experience that draws hunters from all over the country. The Lodges were also the site of a gruesome murder years ago. In desperation, Anna applies to work there, even though she hasn’t moved on from her ex, who’s also an employee. She soon learns that the Royale’s secrets aren’t just suspicious—they’re dangerous. Anna is pulled along until she must solve the mystery at any cost. The book’s atmospheric setting instantly draws readers’ attention and doesn’t let go. Stevens’ short sentences, crisp prose, and deft, omniscient narration add to the story’s propulsion. A knockout. —*Cari Dubiel*

★ **Them Bones.**

By David Housewright.

June 2025. 320p. Minotaur, \$29 (9781250360519); e-book (9781250360526).

Cop-turned-millionaire Rushmore McKenzie isn’t exactly a private investigator. Sure, he takes on the occasional case for a friend, but he doesn’t have a license or, you know, any official standing as a PI. When he’s asked to

track down a stolen dinosaur skull, how can he possibly refuse? Turns out this was no random heist—the people who took the very rare specimen knew exactly what they were doing, and they are determined to hold onto the skull, no matter what it takes. Rushmore isn't what you'd call an action hero, but he's no stranger to physical danger, either, and he's never been known to shy away from a fight. Can he recover the stolen skull without risking his own life? The McKenzie series has been rolling along smoothly since 2004's *A Hard Ticket Home*, and this, the 22nd installment, is just as well written, suspenseful, and satisfying as its predecessors. A sure-fire hit for Housewright's fans. —*David Pitt*

Until Alison.

By Kate Russo.

July 2025. 304p. Putnam, \$30 (9780593850688); e-book (9780593850701).

During her boyfriend's exclusive college party, Rachel sees her childhood frenemy Alison leave with a stranger. Feeling drunk and petty, Rachel doesn't stop her and instead shouts an insult. The next morning, Alison is dead. Racked with guilt, Rachel is plagued by memories of their tumultuous relationship—the many times she looked away while Alison was bullied or occasions when Rachel did the bullying herself. Keeping her last sighting of Alison a secret, Rachel uses her position at her college newspaper to investigate. Who did Alison leave with? Could Rachel have prevented her death? Russo's (*Super Host*, 2021) sophomore novel and thriller debut is a thought-provoking and incisive treatise on the sum of a life's choices, the crippling and long-term effects of bullying, and the general dangers of being a woman. Inspired by her own experiences in Maine and as a journalist, Russo also pays tribute to the true story of a decade-old murder. Recommended for readers who enjoy intense suspense novels with unreliable narrators, such as those by Stacey Willingham and Paula Hawkins. —*Carmen Clark*

YA: *Teens with a penchant for intense thrillers will appreciate the collegiate setting and exposition around childhood bullying.* CC.

We Don't Talk about Carol.

By Kristen L. Berry.

June 2025. 336p. Bantam, \$30 (9780593974438); e-book (9780593974445).

Six Black girls from the same neighborhood in Raleigh, North Carolina, disappeared in the mid 1960s. After her grandmother's death, Sydney Singleton brings their stories and cases to the forefront when she finds a photo of her Aunt Carol, who was one of the missing girls. Tracing her way back through the neighborhood, with important clues shrouded in the shadows of family dynamics, Sydney unravels the girls' cases and contends with both her immediate family trauma and her struggles with starting her own family.

Berry explores issues with police and media favoritism, the historical context for Black families not allowing anything negative to be publicized, and how these factors combined to keep this 60-year-old case unsolved. Berry also highlights the world of true-crime podcasts and internet sleuths who can help solve a crime, if the right amount of respect is applied. Media coverage of missing Black girls, generational abuse, and trauma are deftly brought forth in this nail-biting debut thriller. —*Amia Wheatley*

Welcome to Murder Week.

By Karen Dukess.

June 2025. 304p. Scout, \$28.99 (9781668079775); e-book (9781668079799).

When uber responsible optician Cath goes through her late mother's things, she's surprised to find a fully paid ticket for a weeklong murder mystery simulation in a picture-perfect town in England's Peak District. Cath has spent a lifetime avoiding her mostly absentee mother's flighty schemes, but she's intrigued enough to take the trip by herself. As she gamely immerses herself in solving the "murder" with help from her two housemates, she finds unexpected love in a gently charismatic village bar owner who specializes in creating artisanal gin as well as answers to her many questions about exactly why her often distant and uninvolved mother so meticulously planned this unlikely mother-daughter vacation in the first place. The murder mystery may be fake, but the decades-long secrets she uncovers about her family are real and ultimately life-changing. Combining mystery, romance, and coming-of-age story, Dukess' (*The Last Book Party*, 2019) second novel will engage readers with an inventive twist on the traditional murder mystery. —*Jane Harper*

With a Vengeance.

By Riley Sager.

June 2025. 400p. Dutton, \$30 (9780593472408); e-book (9780593472415).

Sager's newest book, *With a Vengeance*, is also one of his very best. The setup is simple: in the mid-1950s, Anna Matheson invites a handful of people to take a cross-country journey, overnight from Philadelphia to Chicago, aboard a luxury train. Who is Anna? What is her relationship to these seemingly unconnected people? All will be revealed in the author's good time: Sager demonstrates his gift for dispensing information a piece at a time by keeping the reader in a constant state of suspense. And, anyway, Anna's plan—one enacting her own idea of justice—goes tragically wrong when one of the passengers is apparently murdered, and the killer begins picking off passengers, one by one. Back at the top of his game, Sager delivers a thriller so tautly written, so tightly constructed, that readers will emerge from the book breathless and in a mild state of shock. With this book, Sager has committed an act of brilliance. —*David Pitt*

The Woman in Suite 11.

By Ruth Ware.

July 2025. 400p. Scout, \$29.99 (9781668025628); e-book (9781668025642).

Fans of *The Woman in Cabin 10* who might have wondered whatever happened to Laura "Lo" Blacklock will find the answers here. It has been ten years since her disastrous cruise on the *Aurora*, when she witnessed a murder and almost got herself killed. She managed to turn her trauma into a best-seller, *Dark Waters*, but since then, she has married and is living in New York City with her husband and two young sons. Believing that her career as a travel journalist is pretty much over, she is surprised when she receives an invitation to attend the press opening of a luxury Swiss hotel. Lo's fans will be ecstatic at her decision to accept, which of course leads to yet another death-defying adventure for her, but readers who are not so keen on embracing the somewhat improbable might struggle with the ensuing drama. The original book was adapted into a Netflix film starring Keira Knightley, set to debut next autumn, and likely to spark interest in this sequel for new fans. —*Jane Murphy*



HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: A forthcoming Netflix adaptation will drive demand for Lo's next adventure.

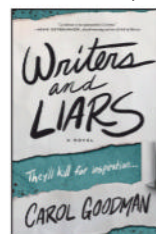


Writers and Liars.

By Carol Goodman.

July 2025. 272p. Morrow, paper, \$18.99 (9780063398733); e-book (9780063398740).

Fifteen years ago, Greek billionaire Argos Alexander summoned a group of writers to his private island for a retreat. Now they are invited back, and having had varying degrees of success in the publishing world, they bring with them the many resentments that have been simmering. When Argos is found dead, everyone is a suspect. They find themselves trapped with no means of communication—and then they start to die off, one by one. Sound familiar? An excellent riff on *And Then There Were None* unfolds within a setting steeped in sinister mythology. It's as if Nemesis, the ancient Greek goddess of retribution, has returned and taken control. Two of the writers are classicists, which is convenient in the perilous and labyrinthine search for answers that reveal some awful truths, contemporary and ancient, about Alexander and his island. In the process, Goodman provides an enlightening look at the barbarous way women were perceived in the ancient world, borne out by the ubiquitous rape and murder themes of the myths themselves, and by the fate of female captives taken in wars. An absolutely perfect vacation read. Fans who remember Mary Stewart fondly will be delighted. —*Jane Murphy*



Graphic Novels

Adult

Brain Damage.

By Shintaro Kago. Art by the author. Tr. by Zack Davisson.

July 2025. 200p. Fantagraphics, \$29.99 (9798875000935). 741.5.

Brain Damage is a work of horror as art; the quartet of tales within plumb the depths of psychological and visceral terror with deftness and a touch of humor as only Kago can. In this collection of four tales, a group of young women must evade a crazed killer bent on creating a gruesome four-panel manga, a health worker is tasked with keeping the undead peaceful until each accepts their death, a family's aging and perverted patriarch's encroaching dementia becomes a life-threatening crisis for an entire town, and a series of bizarre deaths involving used cars sets off a quest to unearth what is happening. Kago's work is at times challenging, with pristine and exact detail. This is a gory and psychological manga that features murder, dismemberment, and incestuous sexual assault. Ultimately, though, each story is scratching at deeper questions about society, making this a powerful and evocative read, best suited for adult readers who are familiar with Kago's work or are readers of other horror mangaka such as Junji Ito or Kazuo Umezz. —Ashley Hawkins

Breadcrumbs: Coming of Age in Post-Soviet Poland.

By Kasia Babis. Art by the author.

June 2025. 256p. 23rd St., \$29.99 (9781250877871); paper, \$19.99 (9781250877888). 741.5.

In mining her own life, comics creator and activist Babis also provides a contextual overview of Poland's sociopolitical communism-to-capitalism transformation between 1989 to 2023. She opens in 2020 Warsaw in a bar following a protest—strewn with placards showing support for reproductive rights—where she drinks and chats with friends. Returning home, she pulls out her journal, marveling at how different her own writing is compared to the memory of seeing her mother's "neat, even" teen pages; she easily extrapolates those quotidian dissimilarities with the vast divides of their very lives. Babis' parents married in 1989, the same year Polish communism fell. Private business and the Catholic Church, "the two things despised by the Communist regime, were now thriving." In that climate, Babis navigates through stifling expectations, social reforms, toxic relationships, evolving friendships, and identity struggles. She draws in black, white, and gray, occasionally interrupted by bright red highlights—emphasizing discomfort and danger. Her epilogue includes additional, panel-less drawings and revealing provenance: "Making these sketches was my outlet for the nostalgia and complicated emotions related to my early adulthood. Ultimately, they inspired me to create this book." —Terry Hong

Call Me Emma: One Chinese Girl Finds Her Way in America.

By Makee. Art by the author.

May 2025. 246p. Street Noise, paper, \$23.99 (9781951491383). 741.5.

Yi-Xuan Liu's immigration story opens with her 2013 arrival at 16 to JFK—after seven years of thwarted "going to America" plans. "Please call me EMMA," she announces in her first ESL class. High school is an endless process of adjustments—from announcing her bathroom needs in class to realizing she "learned most of the stuff American high school taught in [her] Chinese middle school." Her family is seemingly imploding: her formerly professional parents struggle to find menial work, their relationship turns toxic, and her younger sister faces debilitating mental illness. Blatant racism, microaggressions, and miscommunications abound, but making art nurtures her soul—and gives her the courage to claim her own space. Working in "brush and ink on board," as explained in an ending note, Makee uses boundaried panels in a limited palette, their exactness suggesting a sense of order in an often chaotic existence. "The story is deeply rooted in my life," she reveals of her graphic debut, "and it is so close to my identity that I had to get it out of my system before I could produce any other work." —Terry Hong

YA: Makee's account of her teenage years will resonate with YAs struggling to fit in new places. SH.

Checked Out.

By Katie Fricas. Art by the author.

May 2025. 356p. Drawn & Quarterly, paper, \$29.95 (9781770467811). 741.5.

By way of alternating jagged and soft inks and watercolors, Fricas explores the weight of personal projects and adult relationships. Louise is trying to write an "epic graphic novel" about Cher Ami, a pigeon and WWI war hero. Wrapped up in her research, Louise rambles on constant tangents about her fascination with WWI, particularly the pigeons used in the war, over time becoming a veritable historian on the topic. Alongside her passion project, Louise gets a very fulfilling job at the library, leading her to leave her situation at her old job behind. Meanwhile, her mother is unpacking serious personal drama, Louise's relationship starts and ends, and she is drowning in WWI research. In the series of events making up this chaotic period, Louise learns to identify what matters and not get lost in the storm of life. Readers are likely to appreciate Louise's ultimate success as she learns to appreciate the little things. *Checked Out* is a timely twentysomething coming-of-age story, relatable to just about any reader but especially those struggling to balance their passions with a busy life. —Vi Kwartler

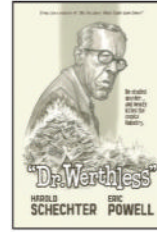
★ Dr. Werthless: The Man Who Studied Murder (And Nearly Killed the Comics Industry).

By Harold Schechter and Eric Powell. Art by Eric Powell.

July 2025. 200p. Dark Horse/Albatross, \$29.99

(9781506744360). 741.5.

The team behind *Did You Hear What Ed-die Gein Done?* (2021) brings readers another



deftly researched work of graphic biography, this time focused on Dr. Frederic Wertham, the psychiatrist and writer who crusaded and raged against the comic book industry. Wertham is an often-reviled figure in pop culture history, and

while the book reinforces that negativity, it also does an admirable job casting light on his complexities and redeeming qualities. Focusing on his career, including the work he did for civil rights, fighting for mental health care for Black communities, and his work with violent figures, such as serial killer Albert Fish (sometimes going into graphic detail), the book doesn't even bring up comics until page 117, ultimately showing Wertham as a stubborn, arrogant man who may have had good intentions. The illustrations in sepia tones are used to full effect, occasionally changing styles to convey different information, such as Wertham's versions of an account as opposed to reality. Though the book attempts a balanced approach, its agenda is clear, and its lack of citations throughout makes it more useful as narrative nonfiction than as a source for information. Regardless, a bibliography and the original documents uncovered from the Library of Congress augment the book's authority. Though heavy in topic, this is a brisk, must-buy book for fans of biographies, comics, and American history. —Jack Phoenix

The Giant: Orson Welles, the Artist and the Shadow.

By Youssef Daoudi. Art by the author.

May 2025. 272p. 23rd St., \$29.99 (9781250805942). 741.5.

Daoudi resurrects the arresting black, white, and gold palette of his previous graphic biography, *Monk!* (2018), to reincarnate the legendary Orson Welles across swirling, shifting, cinematic panels and pages, lettered in "Orson Regular font," created specifically for this title. A larger-than-life figure stands garbed in coat, scarf, and oversize hat obscuring a face in shadow, as golden wafts of cigar smoke loom above the Hollywood sign, ready to answer, "What ever happened to me?" "Genius" was a label Welles earned early: at 23, his *The War of the Worlds* radio adaptation provoked national panic; at 25, he debuted his iconic *Citizen Kane*, which he wrote, produced, directed, and starred in. Later projects couldn't touch that career pinnacle, but he continued to write, produce, direct, and act on celluloid, stage, and even commercials to stay afloat. As many films as he finished—or were forcibly finished for him—almost as

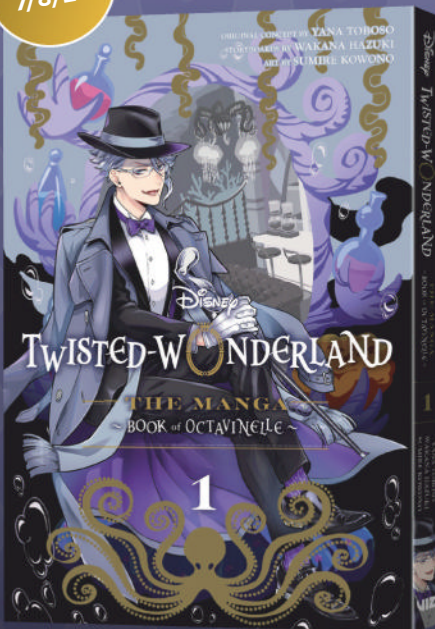
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many were left incomplete when he died in 1985. “I’m sick and tired of people dwelling on the fable of my ‘wasted genius,’” he insists. Enabled by Daoudi’s years of deep research, “I can even act in a comic book!” Welles declares. —*Terry Hong*

The Harrowing Game.

By Antoine Revoy. Art by the author.

May 2025. 224p. 23rd St., \$29.99 (9781250248312); paper, \$19.99 (9781250248329). 741.5.

Paris-born, Tokyo-raised Revoy undoubtedly channels Japanese horror manga masters in his crisply realistic black-and-white panels intertwining multiple narratives of frightening destruction. Meticulous close-ups, haunting zoomed-out scenes from various angles, and uncontrollable page bleeds all add a cinematic quality to his artwork. His ending author’s note, “Created by hand, in Providence, Rhode Island, during the coronavirus pandemic,” suggests an additional layer of anxious inspiration. The titular game grants escape from a mysterious bathroom to the undead storyteller with the scariest tale. Mirror-dwelling Sol takes the first turn, revealing a flesh-eater caged (and nurtured) in a popular teacher’s basement. Bathtub-lingering Ahmad/Mido (the latest of his many names) returns to “the greatest kingdom in history”—Egypt in 2016 BCE—when, as the pharaoh’s beloved son, he witnesses the power of demonic Ümic.

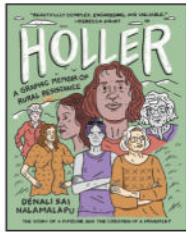
Faceless little girl Grace Sowell, the newest among the trio, recounts quiet, lonely Eileen’s story about an act of kindness that restores her sight—temporarily. Purity, Revoy implies, engenders death. The trio’s unexpected results ensure the terror continues—perhaps signaling the possibility of future, welcome volumes. —*Terry Hong*



Holler: A Graphic Memoir of Rural Resistance.

By Denali Sai Nalamalapu. Art by the author.

May 2025. 172p. Timber, paper, \$21.99 (9781643265230). 920.



While the protests at Standing Rock garnered national attention, pipeline resistance efforts seldom gain that level of notoriety. In Nalamalapu’s debut comic, readers are introduced to organized resistance against the Mountain Valley Pipeline in the form of interviews with six activists from across Appalachia. These six chapters invite the reader to consider their own positionality, to think about what they could or would do to protect their (literal) home land. Nalamalapu, a climate organizer, grounds the interviews in hope and finding the way each person not only contributes to the fight but keeps

themselves going for the long haul. Their illustrations capture the emotion felt by each interviewee so powerfully that at times it feels like you are in the room with them, a fly on the wall, rather than a reader looking back in time at a representation of a conversation. Something activist Karolyn Givens, a childhood cancer survivor, said captures the feeling of the book—and of Appalachian activism—perfectly: “I brought my homemade brownies with me. Because fighting for justice is hard . . . and people have to eat.” This will appeal to fans of comics journalism (like Sarah Glidden’s *Rolling Blackouts*, 2016), comics about place (like Kay Sohini’s *This Beautiful, Ridiculous City*, 2025), and histories of Appalachian resistance to fossil fuel extraction (like Erik Reece’s *Lost Mountain*). —*Matthew Noe*

Not on Display: A Graphic Novel about Female Nudes in the Louvre.

By Zelba. Art by the author. Tr. by Alice Yang.

May 2025. 128p. Helvetiq, \$24.95 (9783039640843). 741.5.

After years of enduring ogling and misplaced appreciation, the nude women featured in the paintings and sculptures at the Louvre have had enough. When Teresa, a longtime night cleaner, hears their pleas and is unable to relay their concerns to the museum’s president-director, the nude women vanish from sight. Filled with plenty of fascinating art history,



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particularly in regard to how artists and sculptors portray gender, this thought-provoking and playful graphic novel, part of the Editions Louvre series, will appeal to readers seeking nonfiction about art. Art buffs will recognize Zelba's realistic replications of some of the Louvre's most famous pieces amid finely, intricately drawn backgrounds of dark orange and aqua blue, with foreground images in black. Many characters have caricatured features, making them easily distinguishable. Parts of the text are meant to rhyme, and some readers may find it frustrating that the English version does not always convey this. While readers will not be surprised by the nudity in the artwork, the Louvre's creative solution to bring back the nudes may be shocking to more sensitive patrons. —*Suzanne Temple*

The Novel Life of Jane Austen: A Graphic Biography.

By Janine Barchas. Art by Isabel Greenberg. 2025. 144p. Black Dog & Leventhal, \$28 (9780762489374). 7415.

It is a truth universally acknowledged, that there can never be too much Jane Austen content. Beginning her inviting graphic biography with Austen's earliest surviving letter to her sister, Barchas, author and scholar on all things Austen, takes readers on a stroll through the streets of Bath and Southampton in this well-researched account of three dis-

tinct phases of the writer's life. Droll humor and lovingly scribbled artwork that seems as if it could have come straight from Cassandra's sketchbook will delight fans of Kate Beaton's *Hark! A Vagrant* comic. While Austen's daily life takes on an intentionally demure color palette of light blues, yellows, and grays, her imagination as she forms her now famous stories is in strong contrasting tones of pink and red. With soft references to the books and popular film adaptations, this biography is a delightful entry point for new fans and a rewarding promenade for established ones, just in time to celebrate Jane Austen's 250th birthday. —*Emerald Martinez*

Preparing to Bite.

By Keiler Roberts. Art by the author.

May 2025. 168p. Drawn & Quarterly, paper, \$21.95 (9781770467743). 7415.

Some moments stick out within day-to-day life, and Roberts is adept at capturing the frustration and humor in such interactions. In this series of freehanded slice-of-life comics, Roberts maintains sarcasm and relatability as she recounts instances with family, friends, and pets. Although there is not a greater plot to the book, *Preparing to Bite* generally explores themes of the tensions of our modern lives, including creative blocks, home-life stressors, and parent-child relationships. Roberts illustrates interactions on the phone,

losing one of her dogs, and harsh truths with her child that are all handled with humorous grace within larger upsetting circumstances. In many ways, this feels like a love letter to comics and to the people Roberts keeps in her life, and as she struggles with her own limitations, she circles back to finding her own way to cope through art. Subtle changes are introduced over the course of the book, quietly indicating the passage of time. Through exploring her relationship to art and family, Roberts' stream-of-consciousness collection engagingly draws readers in to circumstances sure to resonate with a wide audience. —*Vi Kwartler*

Raymond Chandler's Trouble Is My Business.

By Arvind Ethan David. Art by Ilias Kyriazis and Cris Peter.

May 2025. 128p. Pantheon, \$29 (978055387599). 7415.

In this graphic-novel adaptation, readers will recognize the popular, sarcastic, and beloved private investigator Philip Marlowe, who is hired by another PI to assist a wealthy businessman in separating his stepson from Harriet Huntress, the femme fatale out for his money. During his investigation, Marlowe discovers dead bodies, surprisingly skilled chauffeurs, gamblers, and gunmen galore. David's adaptation maintains Chandler's fast-paced and gritty style, packing the pages with

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MANGA ESSENTIALS

Detective Manga

by Ashley Hawkins

In Japan, the detective novel, or *suiri shōsetsu* (推理小説), is incredibly popular, with a history of fan-favorite characters and authors. The popularity of the genre means that it has a powerful influence on other media and formats such as film, television, video games, and—naturally—manga. Whether they are twists on the stories of familiar gumshoes, tales of deductive reasoning in fantastical settings, kid detectives, or simply set in a variety of historical settings, detectives and the tropes of the detective genre are all over manga. Here are just a few great titles featuring detective work.

Case Closed. By Gosho Aoyama. Art by the author. VIZ Media. Gr. 9–12.

Also known as *Detective Conan*, this super-long-running series about a teenage sleuth who's been transformed into a kid detective is a media powerhouse in Japan. When Jimmy Kudo, a high-school detective, is turned into an elementary-age kid while investigating a shadowy organization, he has to disguise himself as Conan Edogawa. Restricted by his younger appearance, he must continue to solve mysteries and try to uncover those behind his transformation.

Don't Call it Mystery. By Yumi Tamura. Art by the author. Seven Seas. Gr. 9–12.

When college student Totonou is accused of murder, he has only one choice: deduce his way out of the situation! With keen insights and a blunt attitude, Totonou finds himself wrapped up in mystery after mystery. The series is oddly gentle for one that deals in murder cases, but that tone is set in Totonou's calm outlook on the world and how he handles the cases he stumbles upon.

Lost Lad London. By Shima Shinya. Art by the author. Tr. by Eleanor Summers. Yen. Gr. 9–12.

This stylish and short detective series about the murder of the mayor of London is tight and incredibly well written. When university student Al Adley takes the Tube home, he has no idea that it's the same time that the mayor is stabbed—he also doesn't know how the knife got in his pocket. But someone definitely wants him to take the fall for it, and it's up to Detective Ellis to prove who committed the crime and, most importantly, why.

My Dear Detective: Mitsuko's Case Files. By Natsumi Ito. Art by the author. Seven Seas. Gr. 9–12.

This delightful manga follows Mitsuko Hoshino, a detective in Showa-era Japan determined to make it as a detective in an era when women rarely worked. Teaming up with Saku Yoshida, a waiter who brings her her very first case, Mitsuko sets out to prove herself, with pluck and a lot of style.

Pluto: Urasawa x Tezuka. By Naoki Urasawa and Osamu Tezuka, with Takashi Nagasaki. Art by Naoki Urasawa. VIZ Media. Gr. 9–12.

Based on a story arc from Tezuka's *Astro Boy*, "The Greatest Robot on Earth," this suspenseful manga follows robot detective Gesicht as he works to track down a serial killer who is murdering both robots and humans, leaving behind disturbing collages in their wake. As it becomes clear that the killer is targeting the seven great robots of the world, Gesicht realizes that he is a target as well.



the action and suspense found in the original hard-boiled fiction. The artwork perfectly matches the noir mood with a muted palette and brighter colors highlighted for various characters: Harriet presents in green and red, George the chauffeur presents in brown and orange, and Marlowe presents in mostly grayscale and yellow. Multiple characters are easy to follow as the lettering for text boxes changes based on the perspective. This title provides a wonderful gateway into graphic novels for adults looking for an entry to the format; curious teens interested in reading a 1940s detective story will enjoy this as well, provided they are not sensitive to violence, smoking, and drinking. —Suzanne Temple

Skin.

By Mieke Versyp. Art by Sabien Clement. Tr. by Sammy Koot.

2025. 288p. Fantagraphics, \$34.99 (9798875000430). 7415.

This striking impressionistic debut explores the inner worlds of two women in different life stages who seek to break conformity and find their true selves beyond the skin-deep. Esther is a struggling artist and stick-bug admirer who refuses to draw things as they are, only what they feel like. Rita is living alone as a newly separated mother of a teenage daughter and mourning her own mother. When Rita takes a job as a nude model for Esther's drawing club, a parallel is drawn between their respective searches for identity and belonging. Mixed-media illustrations utilize watercolors, line drawings, photographs, and even fingerprints to accomplish what Esther describes as the "deepest essence in a few lines, pure and simple." As should be expected, the artwork features nudity during Rita's modeling sessions. Readers will empathize with Esther's desire to be loved and understood and Rita's journey to rediscover who she is beyond a mother and a daughter. A meditative work that will appeal especially to women at every stage, from mourning daughters to lonely mothers and everyone in between. —Emerald Martinez

Viral Hit, v.1.

By Taejun Pak. Art by Kim Junghyun.

2025. 288p. WEBTOON Unscrolled, paper, \$19.99 (9781998854721). Gr. 10–12. 7415.

Hobin is a target for bullying at school, where everyone seems to be a NewTube star, but he's just trying to get by going to school and working his part-time job, which barely pays for living expenses and his mother's hospital bills. After an accidentally streamed fight with Hobin and a classmate goes viral and makes him an overnight success, he decides to make a channel capitalizing on exposing bullies and fighting. Junghyun leans into campy artistic elements to heighten Taejun's overall comedic story line and punch up the absurdity of Hobin's situation, despite the undertones of despair and unfairness running throughout. This story may resonate with current audiences who are themselves

obsessed with chasing viral videos and aspiring to be the next social media influencer. The cursing starts out censored but becomes unfiltered about halfway through the first volume. Hand to readers who have enjoyed titles such as *The Uncanny Counter* or *Wind Breaker*. —Sara Smith

YA: Older teen readers who can handle the violence and bullying inherent in the plot will appreciate this. SS.

Young Adult

Blades of Furry.

By Emily Erdos and Deya Muniz. Art by the authors.

May 2025. 512p. Little, Brown Ink, \$32.99 (9780316459839). Gr. 9–12. 7415.

Move over, *Zootopia*. In this world, anthropomorphic animals compete in battle skating: a showdown featuring ice-skating skills paired with combat, and whomever scores best gets to progress. Emile, a rookie deer with a penchant for anxiety, surprisingly gets matched up with his idol, superstar bat Radu. But their showdown reveals to Emile that Radu is a vampire (a type of animal banned from competing based on prejudicial assumptions), and with this knowledge, he's thrust into an accidental friendship (and rivalry) with Radu. The vampire swears Emile to secrecy, and Emile starts to thaw to Radu's vampire status as they grow closer during training, learning from each other's battle-skating strengths and perhaps falling in love, too. However, there are others in the league who would love to see Radu removed from his championship throne. The married WEBTOON superstars Erdos and Muniz pack this series opener with plenty of fun imagery, a vibrant color palette, and dynamic skating shots during the competition. Great for fans of the manga *Beastars* and sporty queer casts. —Kelly Ferreira

Canto, v.5: A Place like Home. By David M. Booher. Art by Drew Zucker and others.

2025. 160p. Dark Horse, \$29.99 (9781506742762). Gr. 6–12. 7415.

The confrontation with the Shrouded Man and his army is finally here, and it's time to see if all of Canto's hard work gathering allies will come to fruition. In this ultimate test of bravery, it's up to Canto to inspire all of his friends and to lead everyone to stand up against the most powerful being in the Unnamed World. Many of the subplots Booher has laid for several volumes all weave together with satisfying closure as we conclude this Shrouded Man saga and this leg of Canto's journey. This volume has emotional payoffs for Canto and his most stalwart of companions, but likewise, it has moments that will be gut-wrenching for fans of the se-



ries so far. The poignant panels are brilliantly illustrated by the powerhouse team of Zucker and Astone. This all-ages adventure will bring generations of readers together with a timeless story of courage, friendship, and love. Readers who grew up with classics like *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* and *Labyrinth* will appreciate what the creative team has derived in *Canto*. This series deserves inclusion in library graphic-novel collections where readers enjoy *Amulet* or *Lightfall*. —Sara Smith

Everyone Sux but You.

By K. Wroten. Art by the author.

May 2025. 368p. Holt, \$27.99 (9781250821669); paper, \$19.99 (9781250821676). Gr. 9–12. 7415.

Late adolescence is a tumultuous time of change, both in oneself and one's relationships. In dark inks and purple highlights, Wroten illustrates how even the closest friendships can become twisted within the coming-of-age experience as the transition from childhood to adulthood finally starts to take hold. In 2008, Carson tells her story through flashbacks, hinting at the tragedy of her mother's untimely death and the highs and lows of being with her best friend and crush, Ash. Ash challenges Carson in many ways, but they remain together through thick and thin. However, their relationship is never without trouble. Romantic, family, and friendship dramas threaten their connection over the course of their senior year of high school, and by the time graduation rolls around, the damage is permanent. But the memories and feelings remain, following Carson across the country to college. Laden with references to alternative music and the 2000s emo scene, *Everyone Sux but You* provides insight into the mutable nature of teenage relationships through an emotionally resonant queer lens. —Vi Kwartler

Fitting Indian.

By Jyoti Chand. Art by Tara Anand.

May 2025. 288p. HarperAlley, \$26.99 (9780063237544); paper, \$18.99 (9780063237537). Gr. 9–12. 7415.

Nitasha is totally acing high school with awesome friends, excellent grades, and an interested crush. Her friends have nicknamed her India—so cute, right? And yet her teenage dream has increasingly become nightmarish. She actually isn't handling things at all: that nickname isn't really cute when she's struggling with feeling Indian and/or American enough, and she has turned to alcohol and cutting to numb the pains of family strife and peer pressure. Nitasha must choose whether or not to embark on the journey to recovery. Chand's raw, vulnerable writing builds upon her own mental health struggles and alcohol misuse to challenge those who have sought to control the lives of South Asian women and girls rather than uplift their autonomy. Even amid her despair, Nitasha experiences typical teenage sexual desire, which Chand includes candidly. Anand's artwork reflects the character-driven nature of the story: moments of anger are horrifyingly twisted with sharp

lines, while romantic fantasies are in a rush of pink. Recommend alongside YA books addressing culturally specific stigmas around mental health. —Victoria Rabbar

The God-Slaying Demon King, v.1.

By Ezogingitune. Art by PIG3rd and Teddy.

2025. 176p. Square Enix, paper, \$12.99 (9781646093618). Gr. 9–12. 7415.

After a fierce battle with a demon god, demon king Hiram finds himself reincarnated as a human 500 years into his future, hell bent on regaining his former glory and destroying his former foe. He comes face-to-face with Lumiere, an elf princess who's intent on proving herself and is mixed up with an ancient dragon connected to Hiram's past. While Hiram acclimates to this new kingdom, he relearns casting magic in a new body and fighting within his human limitations. In a crowded field of rebirth stories, this manga stakes out a slightly different claim in having the protagonist be a relatively evil being, though it does keep intact many of the tropes of the genre. Intense fantasy violence and an attempted assault on Lumiere make this better for teen audiences, but this story will do well with readers who are passionate about Dungeons and Dragons or other high fantasy manga like *Frieren: Beyond Journey's End* or *Witch Hat Atelier*. —Sara Smith

Murderous Lewellyn's Candlelit Dinner.

By Sumnagi and oL. Art by MUK_BU.

May 2025. 296p. Yen/Ize, paper, \$24 (9798400903427). Gr. 9–12. 7415.

Shavonne has many problems—a dead-end job as a ghost writer, little to no money, renting an apartment in a terrible part of town—but none is so alarming as his new neighbor, a dashing blond man with an unabashed crush on him, whom Shavonne thinks could be a murderer. With the police not caring, Shavonne is left with few options. This story will require careful reading, as there are many mysteries threaded through the first volume in addition to Shavonne's suspicions about his neighbor. As most of the story takes place in the apartment building, the full-color illustrations suffer slightly from a lack of setting and thus palette variations, but readers who are invested may overlook this in favor of unraveling the mysteries or rooting for Shavonne. Fans of BL manga or those who appreciate the intricacies of *The Apothecary Diaries* may also enjoy this story. —Sara Smith

Soul Machine.

By Jordana Globerman. Art by the author.

June 2025. 228p. Annick, paper, \$17.99 (9781773219592). Gr. 7–12. 7415.

Chloe is incredibly frustrated with her older sister, Lacey, who insists on running their family business in a very particular way—a way Chloe thinks is uselessly out of date. The sisters are some of the only remaining weavers of the thread that constitutes a soul, made from a plant called breth. While real breth becomes scarcer and more expen-

sive, the megacorporation that runs nearly everything, MCorp, is pushing its synthetic Digibreth, a manufactured alternative. Chloe sets off for the city in search of new suppliers. Before she can, though, she makes the dark discovery that those who consume Digibreth are doomed to suffer a horrific eternal disconnection from the chain, the natural cycle of things. As Chloe grasps what a precious resource real breth is and discovers dark secrets about the origins of Digibreth, there are no easy answers, and choosing who to trust is always a dangerous game. Strong lines and mostly monochromatic, shifting color palettes create solidity amid the complexity of the narrative; the sisters' world is pleasantly both geometric and whimsical. —*Allie Stevens*

Trans History: A Graphic Novel: From Ancient Times to the Present Day.

By Alex L. Combs and Andrew Eakett. Art by the authors.

May 2025. 384p. Candlewick, \$24.99 (9781536219234). Gr. 7–12. 306.768.

Stuffed to the brim with stories and information about potentially trans historical figures, gender nonconforming people in other societies, and how those outside the gender binary have been perceived over centuries, this takes the reader on a whirlwind tour through time. The authors begin with a thoughtful note about how they are including a range of voices and perspectives but that the narrative will generally follow developments in western Europe and the U.S. From the beginning, with its introduction of various ways of understanding gender from around the world to the profiles of figures like Hatshepsut and Lucy Hicks Anderson to the extensive list of resources at the end of the work, the creators' passion for providing as expansive a view as possible is clear. The book wraps up with an overview of the current conservative backlash plus a palate cleanser of comics centering trans artists, historians, and journalists discussing their lives and activism. A fantastic primer for new readers and old, with dynamic art cleverly based on archival photos, artifacts, and images. —*Sarah Rice*

You and Me on Repeat.

By Mary Shyne. Art by the author.

May 2025. 224p. \$24.99 (9781250851857); Holt, paper, \$17.99 (9781250851840). Gr. 9–12. 741.5.

Chris O'Brien knows that a successful high-school graduation begins with pizza rather than corned beef hash. His goal for the day is to have his first kiss with Andy, but for some reason his lips keep missing hers. Thankfully in Chris' world, the day is on repeat, a never-ending time loop of the same after-party and the same police who ruin the fun. Enter Alicia Ochoa, high-school valedictorian and ex-friend who is also looping. She knows something about Andy, but is Chris ready to hear it? Shyne's debut is an explosion of emotions about elusive grief, familial obligations, incompatible orientations, and maturity through self-awareness. Transitions across

time and space are cleverly color coded in hues reminiscent of pride flags, a fitting motif for a story about acceptance and moving forward. Shyne depicts her characters with authenticity, and the sharp contrasting colors—with deep blacks of graduation gowns against vivid backgrounds—is a great vehicle for Chris and Alicia's explorations of what it means to (not) leave home behind. A cheeky, smart romance with appeal for fans of Heartstopper. —*Victoria Rabbar*

Middle

Astronautical!

By Brooklin Stormie. Art by the author.

May 2025. 248p. Annick, paper, \$16.99 (9781773219424). Gr. 3–6. 741.5.

A long time ago, planet Zephyr was suddenly blown apart, leaving many pieces floating adrift. Many believe the supergiant star known as Cynosure was responsible, but the story was never confirmed. Brothers Max and Lari, who live among the remaining floating pieces of Zephyr, are making a snack stop when their father is suddenly captured by Cynosure's minions, and they set off on a rescue mission to get their dad back. Their journey takes them to all sorts of interstellar beings, including a pair of entertaining dwarf stars, a moody protostar, and even a sinister black hole. As they get closer to Cynosure and Lari starts exhibiting some oddly celestial behavior, the truth about Zephyr becomes increasingly clear. The *Adventure Time*-like energy of the story is a perfect fit for the bold, imaginative artwork, featuring bright yellows against deep blacks to really emphasize the space setting. Stormie's inventive character design, too, gives the story an otherworldly feel. An adventurous yet still heartfelt story that will appeal to fans of Sid Sharp's work. —*Jonathan Khan*

Camp Frenemies.

By Liz Montague. Art by the author.

May 2025. 272p. Random House Studio, \$21.99 (9780593806234); paper, \$13.99 (9780593806258). Gr. 3–6. 741.5.

Three bunkmates at camp get off to a rocky start in this endearing comic. Introverted Bea, who still feels a strong attachment to her stuffed animals, is willing to endure one week of camp if it means she never has to go again. Virginia was excited to go to camp along with all her soccer friends, only this year, she didn't make the team, and now it's the last place she wants to be. And Roxy is just hoping for some time away from the constant arguing in her home. Bea and Virginia don't get along at all, which leaves Roxy feeling even worse than when she arrived, especially when Bea and Virginia start escalating their conflict with mean-spirited pranks. When Roxy goes missing, Beatrice and Victoria must put aside their differences and work together to find their friend. Montague's open, sparsely drawn characters with flat color fills do a good job of capturing the emotional turns of the story.

A natural choice for fans of Raina Telgemeier and Shannon Hale. —*Jonathan Khan*

Creature Clinic.

By Gavin Aung Than. Art by the author.

May 2025. 224p. First Second, \$22.99 (9781250847591). Gr. 3–6. 741.5.

Kara is the senior resident doctor at Creature Clinic, a hospital her grandfather opened to provide medical care for all the fantastical inhabitants of Myth Valley. Her mother is currently the head of the hospital, and Kara works extremely hard to live up to her expectations. Emotions between the two boil over when a giant shows up in need of care and a human boy is found stuck to the bottom of his shoe. Kara is a firm believer in helping all living creatures, while her mother thinks humans are too dangerous. In secret, Kara helps nurse the boy back to health, and hilarity ensues as she tries to keep him hidden from the rest of the clinic staff. Than's bright, bold cartoon artwork entertainingly blends a wide range of fairy tale creatures, such as ogres, werewolves, and unicorns, and the slapstick humor and quick comic timing will surely lead to lots of laughs. Full of fun and heart, this fantasy comedy will satisfy plenty of middle-grade comics readers. —*Jonathan Khan*

Good Boy.

By Andy Hirsch. Art by the author.

May 2025. 208p. First Second, \$22.99 (9781250291967). Gr. 3–6. 741.5.

Charlie is full of anxiety. At its worst, he gets the overwhelming urge to vomit. Hope that a pet might help calm him down, Charlie's parents surprise him with a rescue dog named Ralph. While the two initially don't quite hit it off, they eventually bond enough that Ralph follows Charlie to school. The ensuing mayhem catches the attention of Ms. Patty in the school office; she runs a dog club that teaches obedience training, and she invites Charlie and Ralph to join. Through Ms. Patty's lessons, Charlie and Ralph's connection grows and they both start to gain some confidence, working toward entering a local agility competition. But will Charlie's anxiety get the better of him and hold them back from success? Hirsch's over-the-top cartoon artwork nicely escalates the silly moments of Charlie's story while still thoughtfully showcasing the impact of his anxiety. This moving story about friendship, anxiety, and the highs and lows of dog ownership is sure to find wide appeal, especially for kids who liked Raina Telgemeier's *Guts* (2019) and Megan Wagner Lloyd's *Allergic* (2021). —*Jonathan Khan*

Lu and Ren's Guide to Geozoology. **By Angela Hsieh. Art by the author.**

May 2025. 256p. HarperCollins/Quill Tree, paper, \$15.99 (9780063207905). Gr. 3–6. 741.5.

Migrating guinea pig mountains, island-size axolotls, and floating bands of cloudlike jellyfish are just a few of the delightfully imaginative geozoological phenomena in Hsieh's

clever debut graphic novel. Lu's ah-ma, a notorious explorer and geozoologist, has been in the field for years—long enough that Lu is starting to worry. When Lu learns about some sick ambystufas (stone salamanders) a few towns over, she grabs her grandmother's journal and maps, recruits her friend Ren to join her, and decides to see if she can solve the problem herself. As Lu and Ren try to figure out what's making the ambystufas sick, they learn more about Ah-ma than what they could gather from her journals and follow clues through the countryside to find the source of a wide-ranging ecological crisis. Hsieh's soft, lineless art style is an ideal vehicle for the inventive creatures that blend smoothly into the rolling landscapes. As Lu and Ren travel the countryside and butt heads over their priorities, they gradually learn to appreciate each other's needs and expectations. Throughout it all is a realistic lesson about how one careless action can lead to cascading environmental disaster. A closing field guide with more information about geozoological phenomena will thrill animal lovers. This smart, grounded, and gentle fantasy is a quiet standout. —*Sarah Hunter*

Minecraft, v.1.

By Kazuyoshi Seto. Art by the author.

2025. 192p. VIZ Media, paper, \$11.99 (9781974747146).

Gr. 3-7. 7415.

Ten-year-old Nico White has just unlocked his ability to craft new items without a crafting table, just like his adventurer father before him, and soon, Nico feels the pull to set out on his own. Within days, Nico meets and befriends a human named Gray, who is cursed to constantly look like a zombie. The two decide to travel together to look for the End of the World, a mythical place with inspiring treasures and people. Nico, as described, has one setting—adventure—and all of his page time is dedicated to his high-energy, positive approach to everything. He's fascinated by the world and brings a childlike wonder to every situation. Gray provides a realistic and balanced foil for Nico's enthusiasm. Seto expertly incorporates game material while smoothing out the blockiest of graphics to provide visually pleasing illustrations. There are plenty of references to the source material to keep game enthusiasts happy but also enough explanation to keep newcomers interested in the story. If you have readers who haven't been able to put down *Splatoon* or *Pokémon*, this is the next logical purchase for your library. —*Sara Smith*

The Puzzling Fate of Millicent Graves.

By Dora M. Mitchell. Art by the author.

May 2025. 224p. Little, Brown, \$24.99 (9781523527366).

Gr. 4-7. 7415.

Seeking order through manipulation leads to a fractured world in this discombobulated middle-grade graphic novel where mythol-

ogy and jigsaw puzzles reign. In her family of dreamers, Millicent seems to be the only one with her feet on the ground and her head on finances when she discovers an attic filled with puzzles that represent everyone's lives and personalities. Filled with hubris and somewhat good intentions, Millicent begins altering the people around her. The realistic artwork and looming figure of the boardinghouse bring a slight Gothic feel to the suburbs. The cracks in the universe Millicent causes are drawn as dark, semi-sentient swirls and tentacles. The narrative sometimes feels stretched with a few cracks of its own, requiring readers to be on board without much explanation or justification for anything aside from Millicent's poor decisions. Obstacles continually pile up, only for the resolution to fall a bit flat. An entertaining if loose attempt at a mythological tale with a worthy lesson, even if the protagonist doesn't actually learn it. —*Emerald Martinez*

Reel Life.

By Kane Lynch. Art by the author.

May 2025. 240p. Scholastic/Graphix, \$24.99

(9781338853926). Gr. 4-7. 7415.

Galen and his friends Luna and Kyle are aspiring filmmakers. But Kyle's parents' divorce is causing him to act out in hurtful ways. At first, Galen doesn't understand Kyle's behavior, but he's about to get a better understanding: Galen's parents are also splitting up. His dad moves out into an apartment with his new girlfriend, Jasmine, and Galen doesn't know how to feel about it. He should hate her, right? Even though she's into old movies and generally pretty likable all around? As he tries to adjust to his new normal, he and Luna start to film a documentary full of interviews with insiders, exploring his parents' separation and the complex emotions involved in it. Lynch's bold, colorful art nicely captures the emotions of the characters, particularly as Galen and Luna work on editing their documentary. This thoughtful and accessible comic excellently explores the complicated feelings that are part of divorce and shines light on both the highs and lows of the experience. —*Jonathan Khan*

Squeak Chatter Bark: An Eco-mystery.

By Ali Fitzgerald. Art by the author.

2025. 248p. Fantagraphics, paper, \$24.99

(979887500584). Gr. 3-6. 7415.

Something strange is going on in the PAW Biosphere. An enclosed nature preserve where the visionary, charismatic Dr. Henry Nimick seeks to usher in an era of "good evolution" with genetically engineered, superintelligent animals, the biosphere seems like a shining hope for the planet's future. But Hazel—her parents mysteriously vanished, her only companion the beloved mini-elephant Nina—has stumbled onto something dark and hidden. Following clues left by her scientist mother and gaining insights from the animals whose languages she is learning to speak, Nina confronts the consequences of humanity's greed and ego. Her reliance on a cast of clever,

charming animals subtly but effectively highlights the urgency of balancing our needs with the rest of nature's, each adapting to the other. Fitzgerald, a *New Yorker*-comic columnist, uses her ability to capture human foibles in warm, accessible figures to pitch the visuals exactly right for the age level, and in two alternating hues, she grows feelings of connection, melancholy, and danger with equal abundance. —*Jesse Karp*

Supa Nova.

By Chanté Timothy. Art by the author.

June 2025. 160p. Nosy Crow, \$9.99 (9798887771335).

Gr. 2-4.

Ada Twist meets *Dexter's Laboratory* in this debut graphic novel starring an enterprising, brilliant Black girl. Spurred into action after learning about the plastic islands caused by trash in the ocean, kid genius Nova descends to her (mostly) supersecret lab to create the solution for ocean cleanup: Chomp! A gelatinous pink pal that can digest plastic particles faster than any mushroom or mealworm. But someone should have reminded Nova that matter cannot simply be created or destroyed, because soon Chomp's appetite isn't the only thing that's growing. The energetic artwork pops off the page and brings to mind a Cartoon Network-style episode full of fun colors and larger-than-life antics. Easy-to-follow plot and dialogue within a longer story arc make this perfect for young independent readers ready to graduate from transitional books. Closes with an author's note on the real-life plastic islands. A brainy bonanza with an important message of conservation at its center. —*Emerald Martinez*

Children's

Hide & Seek with Clyde and Monique: Clyde in Plain Sight.

By Graham Annable. Art by the author.

June 2025. 32p. HarperAlley, \$17.99 (9780063414150).

Gr. 1-3.

It's time for an epic game of hide-and-seek in this early graphic novel about two friends getting lost in the lush greenery of an aunt's garden. Clyde has invited his friend Monique to explore his aunt's vast homestead when they have the brilliant idea to play hide-and-seek. Monique searches through bush and bramble, in a cobwebby basement, among the chickens in the coop and the berries in the field, but she can't find Clyde anywhere! Full-scene cartoons illustrate a garden that seems to go on and on. Readers will enjoy their own seek-and-find game as they try to spot Clyde in his many ingenious and physics-defying hiding places from page to page as Monique dutifully searches high and low. Clearly written fonts, large-format panels, and accessible vocabulary will make this a gratifying choice for elementary-schoolers on their way to independent reading. A rustic and comical scene of backyard playtime. —*Emerald Martinez*

Older Readers

Generation Queer: Stories of Youth Organizers, Artists, and Educators.

By Kimm Topping. Illus. by Anshika Khullar.

May 2025. 240p. Lee & Low/Tu, \$22.95 (9781643795201).

Gr. 7–12. 306.76.

In this combination manual, educational material, and inspirational piece, Topping assembles in one place all the information queer youth may need. *Generation Queer* includes extensive histories of queer movements in conjunction with intersectional struggles and alongside time lines of important events for activism. On every page, Topping expresses hope for queer youth and LGBTQIA+ rights movements, supporting young readers by reminding them that they are not alone and giving them concrete methods to become involved with the queer community and learn self-compassion. Notably, Topping includes interviews with queer organizers, artists, and educators, elaborating on the narrative perspective to present readers with options for how they want to become involved. In addition, *Generation Queer* is peppered with queer-history lessons, providing resources for queer youth. The book also includes a section for educators, succeeding in providing tools for young readers struggling with gender and sexuality but also for adults or other allies looking to either brush up their own knowledge or help queer youth in their lives. *Generation Queer* provides a comprehensive look at queer lifestyles, resistance, and education while advocating for self-love and acceptance. —*Vi Kwartler*

A Most Perilous World: The True Story of the Young Abolitionists and Their Crusade Against Slavery.

By Kristina R. Gaddy.

June 2025. 352p. illus. Dutton, \$19.99 (9780593855522).

Gr. 7–12. 326.9.

While Frederick Douglass, William Lloyd Garrison, and other notable abolitionists made it their mission to free enslaved Black Americans, what were their teenage children, raised in these very specific households, doing? Gaddy explores the lives of four young abolitionists, two Black (Lewis Douglass and Charlotte Forten) and two white (George Garrison and Lucy McKim), before and during the Civil War. Within chronologically arranged sections, short, intertwined chapters—fueled by extensive research, quotes from journals, letters, and other primary sources—alternate perspectives among the four young adults. Through their experiences, readers learn more nuanced history, such as how the Kansas–Nebraska Act led to



violence and further divided the North and the South, Abraham Lincoln's delayed abolition of slavery, and racial discrimination of Black soldiers within the Union army. Equally enlightening are the ways these young people received information at the time and interpreted the Constitution, as well as how their views aligned with or differed from their influential parents. At the heart of this narrative nonfiction are also the accounts of typical young adults who aspired to forge their own paths, find romance, realize their dreams, and change the world. Numerous interspersed primary source documents provide greater context to their stories. Gaddy's thought-provoking take on what abolition means today concludes this distinct, well-researched view of American history.

—*Angela Leeper*

The Mysterious Virginia Hall: World War II's Most Dangerous Spy.

By Claudia Friddell.

June 2025. 160p. Astra/Calkins Creek, \$18.99

(9781662680595). Gr. 7–10. 940.54.

Friddell's love letter to a lesser-known WWII spy presents an impressive true story in an inviting format. Virginia Hall—known as Dindy to her family and by a variety of code names to her spy networks and Hitler's Gestapo—sought out a career as a foreign ambassador. After endless rejections, though, she found a new calling in resistance fighting. After studying in France and developing a love for the country, Hall immediately became involved in the French resistance in the face of Nazi Germany's threat. Even after losing her leg in a hunting accident and facing the disrespect of countless men in her field, Hall never hesitated to put herself in danger to help others fight for the greater good. Friddell's biography in verse paints a vivid picture in addition to presenting the facts, grounding the incredible story of an important American woman in illuminating context, while period photos break up the text nicely. A riveting exploration of Virginia Hall's life and work, especially her undercover escapades, told with as much ease and enjoyment as a wartime spy mystery.

—*Vi Kwartler*

Middle Readers

At Last She Stood: How Joey Guerrero Spied, Survived, and Fought for Freedom.

By Erin Entrada Kelly.

May 2025. 208p. illus. Greenwillow, \$18.99

(9780063218901). Gr. 3–6. 940.54.

Newbery medalist Kelly returns to her journalism roots with this biography of Josefina “Joey” Guerrero, a small but fierce Filipina woman who overcame staggering challenges.

Her story is divided into three parts filled with brief, episodic chapters. It begins with Joey's childhood in the Philippines and her adoration of Joan of Arc. Due to scant source material on Joey's early life, the book then skips to her young adulthood, during which Japan occupied her country and she developed Hansen's disease (formerly known as leprosy). Like her childhood heroine, Joey fought for her country, using her physical condition to her advantage to spy for the Americans. While details are not always clear in this section, Joey's unwavering determination is. The next two sections are more straightforward, describing the abysmal treatment of Hansen's disease at the time, Joey's medical treatment in the U.S., and her activism to raise awareness of the disease. Lengthy text boxes offer historical context on topics such as WWII and Japanese propaganda. A courageous, uplifting biography of a woman almost lost to history. —*Angela Leeper*

Black Diamond Kings: Heroes of Negro League Baseball.

By Charles R. Smith. Illus. by Adrian Brandon.

May 2025. 32p. Candlewick, \$18.99 (9781536225358).

Gr. 1–4. 796.357.

This collection of poems celebrates baseball players who were stars in the Negro leagues, franchises that existed from the 1920s to 1962. The poems include a variety of styles (free verse, acrostic, rhythmic chants, even a couplet) and are brief, energetic, and filled with onomatopoeic words like *pop* and *swat* that evoke action and excitement. The illustrations do an especially effective job of capturing motion and movement, elongating players' limbs or distorting bodies to emphasize the amazing athleticism and physical feats. The rich back matter includes brief biographical sketches of the 12 featured players (including their lifetime stats) and an engaging Q&A about the Negro leagues, including poignant questions like “Were the players just as good as the pros in Major League Baseball?” Updates indicate that every player in the collection is a member of the Baseball Hall of Fame (along with 25 colleagues) and that, as of 2024, Negro league statistics are included in official standings, proving that these Black athletes were some of the best who ever played. —*Kathleen McBroom*

Catching Cryptids: The Scientific Search for Mysterious Creatures.

By Kim Long. Illus. by Nicole Miles.

May 2025. 144p. Running Press Kids, \$17.99

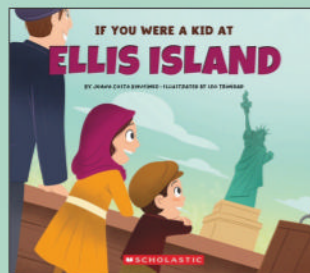
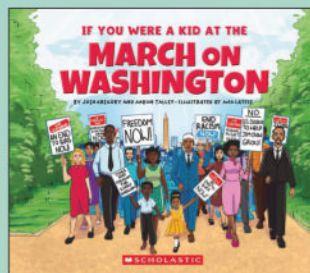
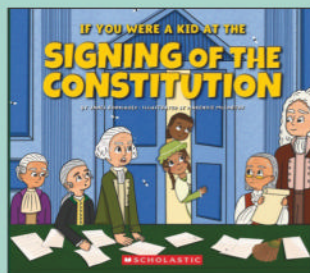
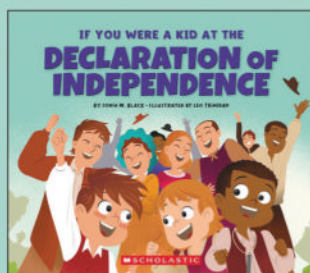
(9780762485758). Gr. 4–8. 001.944.

This wondrous STEM offering is sure to capture the imagination of cryptid enthusiasts and ensnare the attention of curious scientists and explorers. Cryptids (creatures that reportedly exist, despite lack of physical evidence) are excellent at hiding—but they're out there, just waiting to be discovered. En-

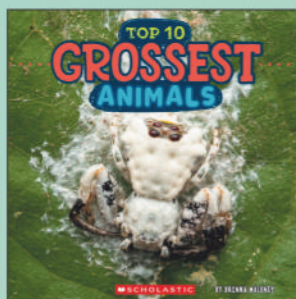
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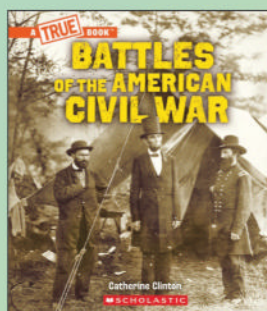
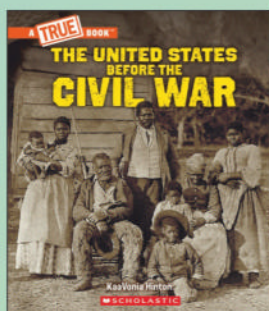
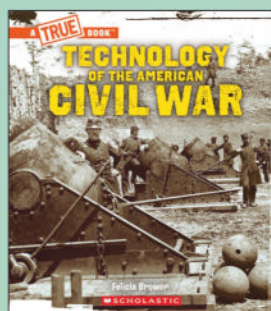
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TALKING WITH KIMM TOPPING

By Kelly Ferreira

Though *Generation Queer* (reviewed on p.72) is their first foray into young adult nonfiction, Kimm Topping is an expert in the field of LGBTQ+ history and advocacy. Noted as “a storyteller at heart,” Topping takes their robust skill set in history, art, education, and writing to new heights in this compilation of biographies of (and manifesto to) young LGBTQ+ people. I was delighted to chat with Topping about their inspiration, motivation, and aspirations for this work.

Kelly Ferreira: *While there are some recognizable names, there aren't many high-profile people in the book. Was there anyone whom you created a biography for who ultimately didn't make it into the book? How did you find your biography subjects?*

Kimm Topping: I appreciate that you noticed this because it was actually very intentional. Any LGBTQ+ young person in the country could have been a featured biography in this book—and I wanted the young people reading this to know that immediately. To see themselves reflected, to recognize that the stories they are reading are similar to their own in so many ways, and that their worth goes well beyond their accomplishments.

There's also this understanding (especially by BIPOC and queer educators) that for too long our histories have been oversimplified to this approach of “holidays and heroes.” Basically, we get to see one example, one hero, one story over and over again, and that they represent the entire community. I really wanted to disrupt the hero approach and bring new voices into the writing of this history. So, I chose not to highlight many well-known activists as feature biographies, not because their contributions aren't incredible and impactful, but because their stories have been told.

I found the people included in the book in a lot of different ways. L Austin-Spooner and Katherine Ferrara were the first people I interviewed because I knew about their work to secure public accommodations rights for trans people in Massachusetts. In researching public accommodations, I found Lillian Lennon, Gavin Grimm, Ashton Mota. As the list expanded, it got me thinking about how to highlight the very distinct ways each person was doing their work. That's how the three main chapters emerged.

Ferreira: *Early on in your discussion of leadership, you ask the reader to “take a moment to pause and ask who is being centered in that narrative and why.” What was your guiding principle in whom you centered in this work and why?*

Topping: Overall, I wanted any young person in the U.S. to pick up this book and feel like their identities, interests, and



dreams were represented in some way. The guiding principle was to center those who are less often the main character in the telling of history, particularly people who are marginalized by racism, classism, transphobia, and ableism. When these stories are told, it often begins and ends with their oppression or marginalization. So in addition to having that guiding principle about who was included, it was also about how—especially as a white queer person working to build trust with everyone that I interviewed—to tell the stories ethically in a way that felt accurate and meaningful for them. I went through multiple drafts with each person and made sure that what was printed felt right for them, especially related to their identities or inclusion of parts of their stories related to trauma, rejection, or other difficult experiences.

Also, all of the stories are intended to humanize: to focus on people's joys and what they are most passionate about and how they see the world and their futures at this particular moment in time. There is so much negativity, misinformation, and dehumanization of queer and trans youth, so this book aims to celebrate and to uplift people.

Ferreira: *Battling “a lack of LGBTQIA+ inclusion in curriculum and education” is thematic across the work. What would you say to those who are looking to include the queer community but are fighting against the current political climate focused on removing queer history from classrooms?*

Topping: I think we must remain clear and dedicated to what we know, which is the educational value of LGBTQIA+ inclusive curriculum and books. Educators select books because they serve an educational value, and often when we see attempts at banning books, it's not at all based on that. It's an attempt to silence an entire community of people and to further marginalize students. These attempts are meant to make us feel uncertain of what we know to be true, which is that inclusive curriculum only has positive effects on students, so I would encourage educators to support one another and minimize that impact of fear.

I think we need to be careful with blanket attempts at banning educational resources, and not be reactionary, and stand boldly and confidently in our commitment to offer accurate, complete, representative history and resources to students. I know that this is much more complicated in very hostile environments where educators fear losing their jobs, so I'd say there are also so many ways to connect young people to resources outside of the classroom—libraries, youth centers, online programs, and other resources, where they can continue to learn about queer history.

Ferreira: *"Much like gender and sexuality, leadership is expansive, and there are so many ways to define it." Can you elaborate on that idea?*

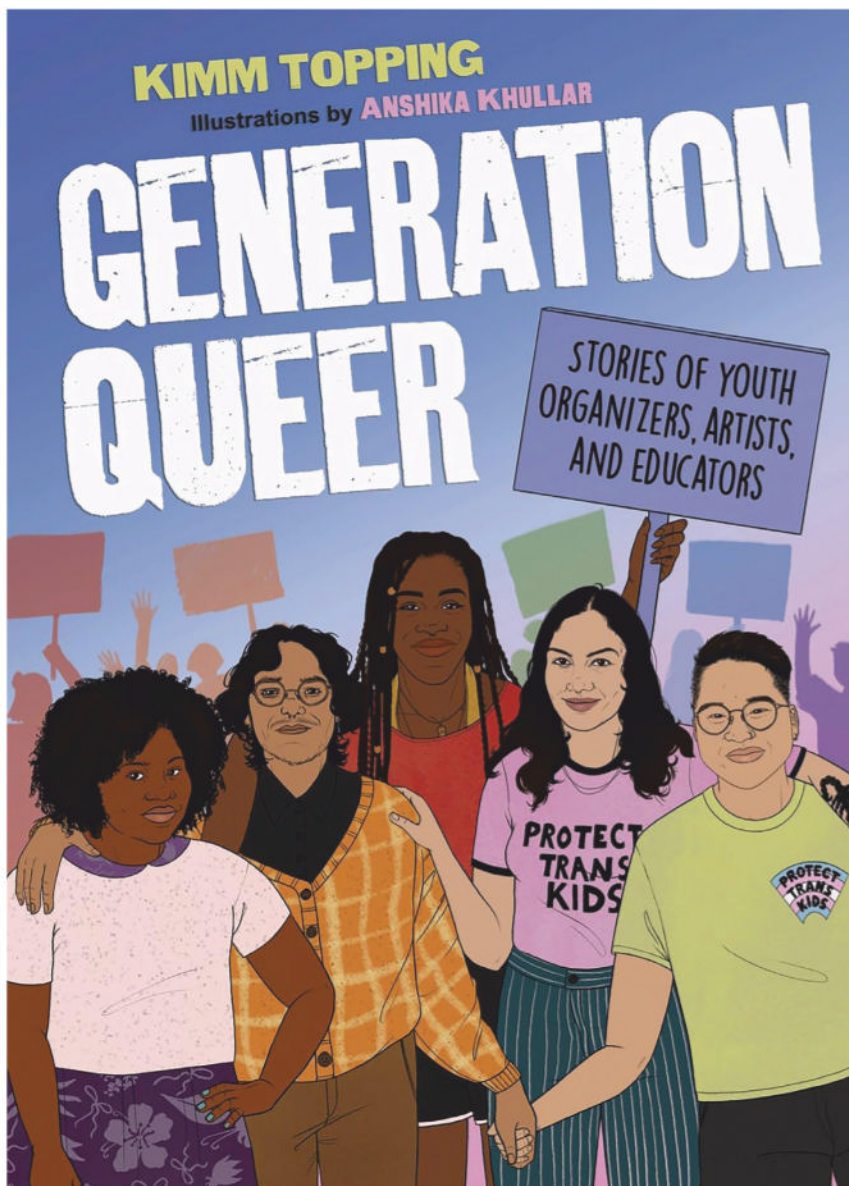
Topping: Yes! Our society depends on binaries to simplify and categorize, but we know that the human experience is so much more complex, and interesting, than just two options. That's true when it comes to identity and when it comes to what's needed in a leader. Young people aren't always seen as leaders; they're seen as learners first and leaders later, but both can be true. And there are so many ways to be a leader: you could be a quiet leader, an artist, an amazing friend, someone who notices the needs of others.

One of the things that I talk to educators about a lot is this idea of adulthood. Built into our traditional model of education is this idea that there's one expert, the adult, at the front of the classroom imparting knowledge on the students. However, learning happens through participation and building collective knowledge. Everyone is an expert on their own experience and has so much to share.

Ferreira: *This is a first collection of illustrated biographies from you and Khullar. What other areas/people would you be interested in featuring in the next iteration?*

Topping: I'm really excited to explore the history of LGBTQ+ youth-led organizations. This book focused primarily on biographies and the ways that individual people work within groups, and now I'm working on exploring those groups and documenting their histories in another book project.

Ferreira: *Plenty of these young people credit empathy-building*



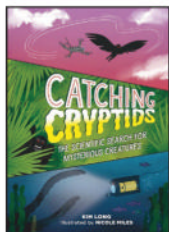
and education as means of advocacy in the community. For the young queer people in a tumultuous political environment right now experiencing compassion fatigue, do you have any words of wisdom for them?

Topping: You are the only person who truly knows who you are. The political environment is meant to make us feel isolated, scared, and without a voice. It's meant to make us question our reality and who we are, because they are intimidated by the ways our community loves and nurtures one another and defies societal norms.

The most liberated, beautiful thing that you can do is live every day as your true self, care for the people around you, and keep using your voice in whatever way feels meaningful for you right now. You are brilliant as you are and you have so much to live for. There are so many future versions of yourself that you haven't met yet, and experiences you'll have, and you deserve to have them.

Continued from p.72

couraging examples invite investigation. Reports of sea monster-like krakens go back to the twelfth century; in 2012, a deep-sea submersible captured footage of a giant



squid that would seem to meet kraken criteria. Species thought long extinct have been rediscovered, thanks to drone-mounted cameras, including the La Palma giant lizard after an absence of more than

500 years. Upbeat entries explore the history, legends, and characteristics of cryptids from all over the world and, after considering animal biology hypotheses and natural phenomena explanations, get serious about tracking down elusive creatures using cutting-edge technology and specialized search protocols. Hunting the Mothman would require computer algorithms to analyze audio calls and AI to sort through camera-trap images. Finding the Beast of Busco (a giant turtle) calls for environmental DNA sampling. Entries devote equal space to animal physiology and technical applications, including detailed explanations supported by charts and illustrations. This inviting cross-curricular offering will surely spark curiosity.

—Kathleen McBroom

Edie for Equality: Edie Windsor Stands Up for Love.

By Michael Genhart. Illus. by Cheryl Thuesday.

May 2025. 40p. Lee & Low, \$20.95 (9781643795829). Gr. 3–6. 306.84.

The power of one person to help many by fighting an unfair system is the theme of this biography of Edie Windsor, whose fight for fairness ultimately led to the Supreme Court allowing gay marriage. Genhart takes a chronological approach, emphasizing two components of Windsor's character from the start: she always followed the rules, and she loved math, where things make sense and "equal means equal." Later, she married another woman, Thea, in Canada because same-sex marriages were illegal in the U.S. What galvanized Windsor into action was a tax bill from the U.S. government for more than \$300,000 because her marriage was not recognized. Windsor successfully sued the government, resulting in the repeal of an important section of the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act in 2013. The digital illustrations are filled with images of Windsor and Thea dancing (including when Thea used a wheelchair) through the years, underscoring the joy of their love. Back matter includes a time line leading up to and beyond *United States v. Windsor* and an author's note on Genhart's own experience coming out. Relatable and inspiring. —Connie Fletcher

Fearless Firsts: Artists Who Changed Entertainment.

By James Buckley Jr. and Ellen Labrecque. Illus. by Steffi Walthall.

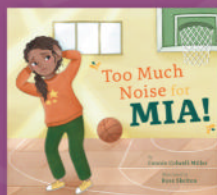
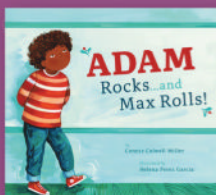
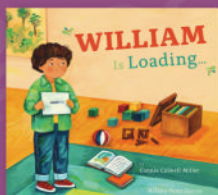
May 2025. 128p. Sourcebooks/eXplore, \$16.99 (9781728275093). Gr. 4–7. 790.2.

This compilation profiles more than 50 celebrities who broke new ground by being the first to achieve an honor or represent a previously marginalized presence in the entertainment industry. Most of these events occurred during the past 50 years. More than half of these pioneers are women; there is strong representation from BIPOC, LGBTQ+, disabled, and neurodivergent populations. More than 20 professions are included, ranging from artists and comedians to dancers and magicians to screenwriters and puppeteers. The entries are arranged alphabetically, with each luminary covered in a one-page, five- or six-paragraph career overview facing a full-page illustration. Their stories concentrate on career highlights and include sufficient context to justify why each person is noteworthy, often citing examples of grit and determination in the face of adversity. The entries are laudatory and squeaky clean; there's scant mention of scandal or controversy. Helpful support material includes time lines and references for further research, plus a celebrity-by-occupation index. This will be of great interest to kids and

AUTISM LOOKS LIKE ME

"[A] lovely offering . . . accessible to both autistic and non-autistic readers."

— Booklist Starred Review of *Adam Rocks...and Max Rolls!* ★



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adults looking for performing role models.
—*Kathleen McBroom*

Forest Magic for Kids: How to Find Fairies, Make a Secret Fort, and Cook Up an Elfin Picnic.

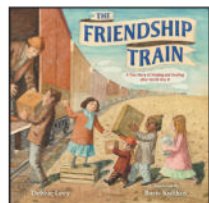
By **Susie Spikol**. Illus. by **Renia Metallinou**. 2025. 144p. Gibbs Smith, \$19.99 (9781423665533). Gr. 2–5. 745.

Naturalist Spikol taps into childhood memories and her continued sense of whimsy in this magic-dusted guide to outdoor exploration and natural crafts. Science facts readily interweave with a smattering of folklore as the text and charming illustrations encourage kids to charge up their imaginations and get outside. Over the course of six lightly themed chapters, kids can try their hands at making magic wands from sticks—as well as moss gardens, forts, leaf crowns, pixie dust, and spore prints—while keeping their eyes peeled for wildflower fairies, elves, gnomes, and trolls. Tips on how to respectfully and safely interact with nature are included throughout; cautions are generally applied where necessary. The book is appropriate for a wide range of readers, depending on the level of adult assistance available. Upper-elementary students should be able to handle the substantial but engaging text, which features broad introductions to chapter themes, step-by-step instructions for each activity (but no reference illustrations, alas), and clear lists of materials needed. The spirits of scientific inquiry and old-fashioned wonder coexist happily here and will delight magic-minded children. —*Julia Smith*

★ **The Friendship Train: A True Story of Helping and Healing after World War II.**

By **Debbie Levy**. Illus. by **Boris Kulikov**. June 2025. 48p. Bloomsbury, \$20.99 (9781547608027). Gr. 1–4. 940.53.

Best-selling author Levy explores another remarkable moment in history with this picture-book account of the Friendship Train. With tact and care, Levy describes the devastating food shortages Europeans faced in the aftermath of WWII. Evocative images, such as a map of Italy and France covered with the faces of sad and hungry children, segue to the American effort to help European children, spearheaded by journalist Drew Pearson. Orchestrating a large-scale food drive, Pearson arranged for a “Friendship Train” to travel across the U.S. collecting donations for the people of Europe. Levy movingly describes the generosity of Americans and how children rallied behind the cause, drumming up contributions and requesting Halloween “treats” of nuts and dried fruits and flour and macaroni for the hungry people across the sea. Eventually, the train grew to more than 500

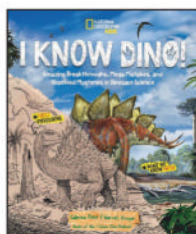


boxcars. The story continues in France with André Picard, who wanted to show gratitude by collecting gifts for the American children who had been so generous. Kulikov’s delicate art, created with pencil, black tea, and acrylic gouache, imparts an antique, old-world aesthetic that invites readers to immerse themselves in the story. A note with more context about the war and Drew Pearson concludes with an extensive bibliography. An uplifting, warm reminder about international generosity and solidarity—a welcome and important message in our current international climate. —*Ana Menchaca*

★ **I Know Dino! Amazing Breakthroughs, Mega Mistakes, and Unsolved Mysteries in Dinosaur Science.**

By **Sabrina Ricci** and **Garret Kruger**. 2025. 112p. illus. National Geographic Kids, \$16.99 (9781426375538). Gr. 3–6. 567.9.

Dinosaurs may be a well-worn subject, but new discoveries have a way of keeping them forever fresh. This excellent entry exploring the latest finds comes from hosts of a podcast of the same name, and their enthusiasm shines through on every compelling page. The presentation takes the form of a scrapbook, with photos seemingly taped to the pages and paper-clipped parchment paper scattered throughout. There are several themed chapters, from dinosaur firsts (first full skeletons found, first mounted skeleton presentation) to the Bone Wars of the 1800s, but specific dinosaur bios appear every few pages; even dinosaur fanatics are sure to find a new creature or two. A strong focus on the evolution of scientific understanding weaves it all together, and a series of “first impressions” with subsequent “what we know now” comparisons are particularly fascinating, offering glimpses into how scientists make educated guesses and gradually piece together new information. The casual tone and frequent humor make for a breezy read, but that doesn’t mean there’s not plenty to learn along the way, and readers are often invited to take in facts and form their own opinions. Remarkably lifelike renderings add to the intrigue, and helpful back matter includes a glossary and a hefty index useful for research purposes. An exhilarating exploration of an always interesting subject that begs for repeat readings. —*Emily Graham*

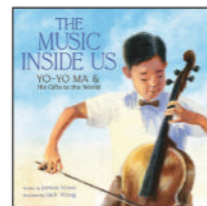


★ **The Music Inside Us: Yo-Yo Ma and His Gifts to the World.**

By **James Howe**. Illus. by **Jack Wong**. June 2025. 48p. Abrams, \$19.99 (9781419755217). K–Gr. 5. 927.85.

Yo-Yo Ma had achieved fame as a brilliant musical prodigy at age five, but in this insightful book, Howe doesn’t just provide the

story of Ma’s life as a musician; he also discusses his lifelong interest in understanding music and its role in our lives. This book includes basic biographical information about Ma’s childhood and the decisions that led him to become one of the most widely known, respected, and beloved cellists ever. Always questioning the nature, purpose, and meaning of music, as an adult, Ma has reached out to musicians around the world, enabling friendships and collaborations based on his long-time interest in music from other cultures. In 2006, he was appointed a United Nations Messenger of Peace. Wong’s illustrations, created with acrylics, crayons, and watercolors and digitally edited, are beautiful and engaging. While the book is accessible to young children, it may be more meaningful to somewhat older readers. Howe’s plain-spoken but high-minded reflections on Ma’s accomplishments will resonate with kids who admire the cellist, as well as the many readers who, though perhaps unfamiliar with Ma himself, are drawn to his ideal of uniting people around the world through their music. —*Carolyn Phelan*



★ **On the Move: Things in Motion on Earth and Beyond.**

By **Romana Romanyshyn** and **Andriy Lesiv**. Illus. by the authors. Tr. by **Oksana Lushchevska**.

May 2025. 64p. Enchanted Lion, \$19.99 (9781592704149). Gr. 1–4. 380.

In a wide-angle, graphically inspired picture book originally published in Ukraine, Romanyshyn and Lesiv combine history with meditative insights on the theme of movement. Paired with propulsive, minimalist scenes that combine simplified images of many-wheeled, winged, and floating objects with horizontal lines, arrows, and other iconography indicating progressions in various directions at increasing speeds, the spare narrative points to technological highlights, from prehistoric foot coverings to modern spacecraft. Frequent digressions touch on motion-related topics, from animal migrations and human refugees to maps, tourism, and great travelers spanning from Herodotus and Neil Armstrong to Ukrainian photographer Sofia Yablonska. Along the way come pauses to reflect on the rewards of stopping to rest and look around; to visit sites important to different world faiths; to change directions, physical or otherwise, now and again; and to value crossing paths with others engaged in a journey of their own. In closing: “It’s always good to return home, and it’s always exciting to set off on another adventure!” For all its brevity, this title provides a profound



exploration of the fundamental notion that everything moves. —*John Peters*

Rebels, Robbers, and Radicals: The Story of the Bill of Rights.

By Teri Kanefield. Illus. by Kelly Malka.

May 2025. 224p. Abrams, \$19.99 (9781419768262). Gr. 5-8. 342-73.

This well-researched examination of the Bill of Rights provides an easily digestible explanation of the first 10 amendments of the Constitution and their significance, specifically for young readers. The book's 10 chapters describe each amendment's text, the intention behind it, and relevant court cases that support it. For example, the Fourth Amendment cites the court case *New Jersey v. T.L.O.* about the legality of searching a student's personal belongings by school officials. The book contains color illustrations and interesting facts, such as how soldiers during the Civil War weren't trained to shoot but were just expected to know how and to supply their own weapons. The First and Second Amendments' chapters go into more depth than other amendments, and it's amusing to learn why legal scholar Tom W. Bell says, "The Third Amendment is to be pitied." Kanefield's discussion of the historical significance of the Bill of Rights and why its legal protections for individuals remain so important will resonate with today's youth. An author's note, the 27 Amendments in the Constitution, notes, bibliography, and index (not seen) conclude. —*Sharon Rawlins*

The Spider Lady: Nan Songer and Her Arachnid World War II Army.

By Penny Parker Klostermann. Illus. by Anne Lambelet.

May 2025. 48p. Astra/Calkins Creek, \$18.99 (9781662680359). Gr. 2-5. 940-53.

Self-taught naturalist Nan Songer turned her passion for insects and arachnids into a successful business venture by harvesting spider silk during WWII—specifically for use as crosshairs in weapons' sights. This picture-book biography begins with Songer's early love of nature, fostered by her neighbor Marie Meislahn, a biologist and naturalist, before moving quickly to Songer's adulthood, where her home was filled with live specimens and her brain was bursting with ideas. The prospect of using spider silk for anything but weaving webs will fascinate young readers, and Songer's creative efforts to collect the silk with homemade contraptions will easily hold their attention. All Songer's trial and error and eventual success are captured in sepia-toned illustrations, which contain historical and scientific details while creating a clear portrait of Songer herself. An extensive author's note offers more specifics on Songer's life, and quotes throughout the main text are sourced in the bibliography. An intriguing snapshot of the intersection of human invention and the natural world, perfect for STEM collections. —*Julia Smith*

The True Story of Vanilla: How Edmond Albius Made History.

By Ann Richards. Illus. by Arden Taylor.

May 2025. 104p. Orca, \$24.95 (9781459838444). Gr. 4-7. 338-173.

This moving and bittersweet biography recounts how, in 1841, 12-year-old Edmond Albius, an enslaved houseboy on a sugar plantation on the island of Réunion, discovered how to hand-pollinate vanilla orchid plants. Before that, the plants could only be pollinated by bees in Mexico. His momentous discovery, known as *le geste d'Edmond* (Edmond's gesture), is still used today and helped the French colony of Réunion become a major worldwide vanilla-producing industry. Because he was uneducated and enslaved, many people didn't believe Albius' accomplishment. Botanist Jean Michel Claude Richard even tried to take the credit himself. Freed at age 19, Albius struggled to make a living, spent time in prison for stealing, and died at 51. Ferréol Bellier-Beaumont, Albius' former enslaver, repeatedly tried to get the island's governor to pay Albius for his discovery, but it never happened. When Albius was 34, he finally received credit for his pollination technique when his contribution appeared in a published article on the history of vanilla. Bright, colorful digital illustrations by Taylor vividly show what island life was like during this time period. The book discusses the reality of slavery and the racial violence and prejudice formerly enslaved individuals experienced. This engaging title includes sidebars and fun facts about vanilla and concludes with a time line, glossary, resources, and index. —*Sharon Rawlins*

We Carry the Sun.

By Tae Keller. Illus. by Rachel Wada.

June 2025. 48p. Norton/Young Readers, \$18.99 (9781324031123). Gr. 2-5. 621-47.

Thousands of years ago, people built their homes facing south to gather sunlight during the day and retain some heat at night. Beginning in the 1800s, people burned coal to heat buildings and power the Industrial Revolution, while a French teacher/inventor—wondering what would happen when people ran out of coal—experimented with using sunlight to run a machine. Unfortunately, coal delivered more power at a lower price. Around the world, inventors and tinkerers, both men and women, brought new ideas to the challenge. Meanwhile, scientists and engineers made cheaper, more reliable solar power a reality. Keller, whose middle-grade novel *When You Trap a Tiger* (2020) won the Newbery Medal, chose the invention of solar power as the topic for this nonfiction book. Though she had originally expected to find a single inventor, she discovered a number of people who had solved problems related to the goal and contributed significantly to making

solar power a reality. The text is engaging, and the imaginative, colorful, and often dramatic artwork will draw readers to this informative picture book. —*Carolyn Phelan*

The Whale's Song: Discover the Giants of Our Oceans.

By Rossana Bossù. Illus. by the author. Tr. by Margaret Greenan.

June 2025. 80p. Post Wave, \$19.99 (9798895090121). Gr. 4-8. 599-5.

This handsomely designed, graphics-rich picture book about whales comes to the U.S. from Italian illustrator Bossù. Designed for middle-grade audiences, the book contains many pages featuring considerable amounts of text in fairly lengthy paragraphs. The coverage includes fresh, up-to-date information on a number of whales, such as how

spumes differ (blue whales shoot one stream straight upwards, as high as 40 feet; bowhead whales' spouts emerge in two streams and are shaped like giant V's) and descriptions of cross-species interbreeding, possibly prompted by climate change stressors—"wholphins," crosses between bottlenose dolphins and killer whales, and "nargulas," produced by narwhals and belugas. Additional matter covers life cycles, interactions with humans, myths, and heaps of fascinating trivia. The thoroughly engaging text is supported by vibrant illustrations that spill across double-page spreads, befitting the grandeur and majesty of the subject matter. Bright primary blocks of color highlight captions and set off the numerous maps, diagrams, interior views, and special features; handy charts help visualize size and weight comparisons and contrasts. Considerable space is devoted to international whale conservation efforts. A visual delight, this cetacean-centric compilation offers solid information for researchers and fascinating illustrations that will enthrall browsers. —*Kathleen McBroom*

The Woman behind the Magic.

By Brittany Richman. Illus. by Joanie Stone.

June 2025. 40p. Simon & Schuster/Beach Lane, \$19.99 (9781665962742). Gr. 1-4. 791-43.

This narrative biography introduces Lillian B. Disney, one of the first employees of the Disney Brothers Cartoon Studio and the eventual wife of Walt Disney. The youngest of 10 children, Lilly moved to Hollywood as a young adult and was hired as an inker for Disney cartoons. Over their decades together, she reliably provided "behind-the-scenes magic" for Walt Disney's grand ideas, including naming Mickey Mouse. The illustrations have a classic early Disney sensibility (including a scene of Lilly greeting a bluebird while doing laundry), which reinforces the text's time frame and generally light touch. Back matter notes that researching Lilly's perspective is a challenge, as she was a private person in an era when even

prominent women were primarily expected to support their husbands. This may explain the text's overall feeling that Lilly's life was a series of reactions to outside forces, driven only by a vague fondness for "magic" and working "behind the scenes" rather than by a specific individual outlook. Recommended for large collections or readers with a particular enthusiasm for all things Disney. —*Elisha Brookover*

Young

5-Minute Ocean Stories.

By Gabby Dawnay. Illus. by Mona K.

2025. 112p. Abrams/Magic Cat, \$14.99 (9781419776939).

PreS–Gr. 2. 550.

This delightful collection of 10 five-minute read-aloud stories is perfect for young ocean lovers. Each tale takes readers on a vibrant underwater journey, introducing them to fascinating marine life and their adventures. From the playful partnership of "The Clownfish, the Anemone, and the Big Coral Reef" to the whimsical look of "The Great White Shark's Tooth Machine," the stories seamlessly blend facts with fun. Children will be enchanted by the melodic "Song of the Humpback Whale" and the reverse metamorphosis of "The Time-Traveling Immortal Jellyfish." The quirky "Shape-Shifting Octopus" brings danger tinged with humor, "A Penguin's Squeeze in the Freeze" features a fascinating birth story, while "The Migration of the Magical Eel" and "The Salty Tears of the Sea Turtle" add a touch of wonder and emotion. Each story includes an "All About" section that reveals awe-inspiring facts about the ocean creatures to extend the learning and enjoyment. With engaging characters, vivid storytelling, and perfect pacing for bedtime, this book is a treasure trove of underwater adventures. A must-read for curious little explorers. —*Alana Jara*

Ablaze: The Story of America's First Female Smokejumper.

By Jessica Lawson. Illus. by Sarah Gonzales.

July 2025. 40p. Viking, \$18.99 (9780593463659). K–Gr. 2. 628.92.

This picture-book biography tells the story of Deanne Shulman, America's first woman smokejumper. When she was little, Shulman loved backpacking and being outdoors, which led her to follow her brother into the United States Forest Service. After a series of physically demanding, increasingly dangerous firefighting assignments, like clearing brush and fighting hotshot fires, she was ready for her dream job: being a smokejumper. Shulman trained hard and was prepared, but she wasn't allowed to take the test because she didn't meet the minimum height and weight requirements. Frustrated, Shulman claimed sex discrimination and filed a complaint under the Equal Employment Opportunity Act. Finally, after almost a year, her appeal was granted. She took the test, passed, and saw the height and weight requirements

adjusted to reflect broader parameters. Shulman's story is told in simple but expressive language, and the illustrations often feature a slightly gauzy aspect, like sunlight filtering through leaves or wisps of smoke. The back matter includes an illustrated glossary and author's note. A satisfying and timely offering. —*Kathleen McBroom*

★ Firefly Song: Lynn Frierson Faust and the Great Smoky Mountain Discovery.

By Colleen Paeff. Illus. by Ji-Hyuk Kim.

June 2025. 40p. Simon & Schuster/Margaret K. McElderry, \$19.99 (9781665931847). K–Gr. 3. 595.

Attentive young Lynn relishes the "dark crystal waters" of the swimming hole and treasures of "the light-dappled forest" of Elkmont in the Great Smoky Mountains. She spends summers exploring the woods from a family cabin there, though the Park Service is now displacing park residents. Curiosity about a striking synchronous firefly phenomenon—a hypnotizing six-second "spangled bear" that has mesmerized her her whole life—leads



self-taught naturalist Lynn Frierson Faust down a long and rewarding research path that eventually proves these special lightning bugs' (*Photinus carolinus*) existence

to the scientific community and invites the world to appreciate their wonder. Immersive watercolor-and-digital paintings create a world readers will long to get lost within, with moss clinging to hulking boulders and the shimmer of countless fireflies lighting up the darkening sky. A notable variety in perspectives and page layouts includes panels and lush full-page spreads, while a brilliantly designed rendering of the "exquisite unity of the light show fireflies" interspersed with swaths of darkness is a visual showstopper. Evocative language keeps pace, pairing admiring details about Lynn's patient work with pleasingly detailed descriptors of her environs: "Light cascades down the hillside, like a glittering, star-filled waterfall." Rich back matter demonstrates thorough research and supports young naturalists' continued curiosity. An absolute must-purchase—truly enlightening and positively radiant. —*Kit Ballenger*

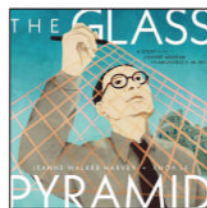
★ The Glass Pyramid: A Story of the Louvre Museum and Architect I. M. Pei.

By Jeanne Walker Harvey. Illus. by Khoa Le.

May 2025. 40p. Atheneum, \$19.99 (9781665953337). Gr. 1–3. 720.92.

Harvey adds another stunning title to her body of work in this lyrical picture book of an iconic piece of architecture. I. M. Pei, a renowned Chinese American architect, was commissioned by the French president to redesign the world's largest museum, the Louvre, to make more room for art restora-

tions and a clear entrance for visitors. Pei kept his project a secret; he was an outsider and had faced a lifetime of discrimination and criticism for his nationality, inventiveness, and unconventional building designs. For this project, he drew inspiration from the ancient stone pyramids of Egypt, the Buddhist retreats of China, and the geometric gardens of Versailles to create the modern glass pyramid which seems to "grow out of the courtyard." But it didn't come without trials: "Success is a collection of problems solved," and Pei exemplified this by overcoming adversity, time constraints, and skepticism at every step. The digitally painted illustrations mimic the architecture beautifully, appearing as weightless as the pyramid itself while artfully highlighting the places and ideas that came together in Pei's ultimate design. With helpful back matter offering even more context, this is a worthwhile addition to any picture-book collection, especially where books about architects, artists, and architecture are popular. —*Rachel Chapman*

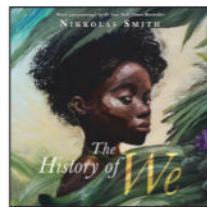


★ The History of We.

May 2025. 40p. Penguin/Kokila, \$18.99 (9780593619681).

K–Gr. 3. 569.9.

Taking his cues from established scientific evidence, Smith transports readers hundreds of thousands of years back, to modern humanity's original ancestors in Africa. The opening image is of an outstretched hand, finger extended in a parallel to Michelangelo's *Creation of Adam*—except this hand has dark skin. From there, a series of stunning spreads trace



the progress of the human race, punctuating each development with a "we" statement: "We painted," "we crafted," "we orchestrated . . . music," "we became inventors," "we were architects," "we grew," "we healed," "we saw worlds beyond our own," "we set sail," "we explored." Each chapter of our history is set upon gorgeous painted landscapes or scenes of human ingenuity in action, always featuring a brown-skinned figure. Joy, struggle, and innovation are displayed throughout the ages, not only laying out a wide-spanning history but also upending the problematic idea that civilization began much later and that it was rooted in whiteness. A final spread shows a crowd of people, the "extended cousins" in "an array of diverse complexions and forms of prayer," showing every modern "race" that evolved out of our common ancestors. Excellent back matter adds more specifics to the story of each spread within, and an author's note makes a moving case for the value of this book and of remembering the shared origins of our global community. —*Romy Khuri*

Hope Rode.

By Lauren H. Kerstein. Illus. by Becca Stadtlander.

Aug. 2025. 48p. Union Square Kids, \$18.99 (9781454948483). K-Gr. 3. 027.4.

In lyrical language, Kerstein salutes the “FIERCE AND FAITHFUL / STALWART AND STRONG” packhorse librarians—women who were hired by the Works Progress Administration to provide mobile library services to remote areas of Kentucky. As a measure of their dedication in both the main narrative and the extensive back matter, Kerstein notes that the new hires had to find their own books, packs, and even horses before setting off on their mission. Stadtlander follows one solitary figure braving bad weather and open country, getting a hostile reception as an unwanted distraction at one farmhouse, friendlier receptions at others, and an eager welcome from children at a small schoolhouse. “Families inhaled possibility and exhaled isolation” as these “brazen, bold, and brave women rose to the call,” delivering books to more than a million and a half patrons. Because Kerstein could find no evidence that the service was offered to BIPOC populations, all the faces in the painted illustrations are white; but a photo at the end of dark-skinned Kentucky readers participating in another WPA library program adds an inclusive note. —*John Peters*

I, Rock: A Geology Tale.

By Katie Slivensky. Illus. by Steph Stilwell.

June 2025. 40p. Simon & Schuster/Beach Lane, \$19.99 (9781665940368). Gr. 1-3. 551.

A rock stuck under a student’s shoe interrupts classroom presentations to tell its own four-billion-year-old story. The expressive, gray cartoon rock with large, round eyes starts its chatty geological tale deep underground, where it meets some of its minerals. After a tour of Earth’s layers and plates and their roles in volcanoes and earthquakes, the rock explains with humorous yet informative visuals and snappy, personalized descriptions how it cycles through the three types of rock (igneous, sedimentary, and metamorphic) over time. Whether blasted from a volcano, thrown onto land by a tsunami, or kicked by dinosaurs, the seemingly boring life of a rock is anything but. As the rock narrator introduces geological terms along the way, another professorial-looking rock highlights some of these terms with their definitions in blackboard fact boxes. While relating the final topic, erosion, the rock tumbles down the side of a mountain, waiting only a few million years before a student steps on it and brings the story back full circle. Concluding detailed geology and earth-science facts let readers rock on. —*Angela Leeper*

Light: The Extraordinary Energy That Illuminates Our World.

By Jess Wade. Illus. by Ana Sanfelippo.

July 2025. 32p. Candlewick, \$18.99 (9781536243635). Gr. 1-3. 535.

In this informal but not simplistic discourse, physicist Wade explains what light is and how

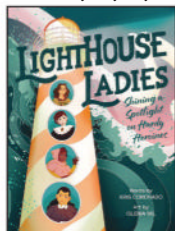
it behaves—as incredibly fast waves, for example, that generally travel in straight lines but can bounce off opaque objects and spread out into a rainbow after “sort of wriggling their way through” certain transparent ones. She also sheds light on wavelengths and visible colors, leading to a glance at the entire electromagnetic spectrum as well as shadows. While pointing to other sources of light, from lightning to lantern fish, she focuses mainly on sunlight and how its energy is used not only by plants and animals but in human-specific medicine and technology to run quantum computers and see into the ocean depths and the farthest reaches of space. In Sanfelippo’s glowing illustrations, a sunny-faced young STEM-winder and her beaming pooch guide viewers from nighttime sweeps of starry skies and lush daylight landscapes to glimpses of solar cells and other tech marvels on the way to a final, prism-generated rainbow. There’s much here for younger readers to absorb and reflect on. —*John Peters*

Lighthouse Ladies: Shining a Spotlight on Hardy Heroines.

By Kris Coronado. Illus. by Islenia Mil.

May 2025. 48p. Clarion, \$19.99 (9780063351837). PreS-Gr. 3. 920.

This fascinating nonfiction debut upends the idea that only men helmed lighthouses during their heyday by showcasing four of the many



women who did this grueling, lifesaving work. The text first gives an overview on the demands of keeping a lighthouse, from cleaning the lamp and trimming wicks to making sure the light burned steadily. But the emphasis is on the perils inherent in lighthouse keeping, shown in stories of four women, spanning from 1869 to 1925, each of whom responded courageously to emergencies. We meet a woman at a lighthouse off Newport, Rhode Island, who, in 1869, rowed out to a capsized ship during a tumultuous storm and rescued drowning sailors; another woman in a San Francisco Bay lighthouse who responded to a broken foghorn during enshrouding fog in 1906 by pounding a hammer on a bell for 20 solid hours; a third woman in a lighthouse off the coast of Virginia who navigated a dangerous ice channel in 1912 to get provisions for the lighthouse she and her husband worked, finding her husband dead on her return; and, finally, a “lighthouse girl” who took over the family’s lighthouse in Hawaii after a volcano erupted in 1925. The digital illustrations offer astonishing viewpoints from inside and out, putting readers right in the middle of the action. A wonderful addition to lighthouse lore. —*Connie Fletcher*

Living Bridges: The Hidden World of India’s Woven Trees.

By Sandhya Acharya. Illus. by Avani Dwivedi.

June 2025. 40p. Simon & Schuster/Beach Lane, \$19.99 (9781665950299). K-Gr. 3. 580.

The South Indian state of Meghalaya is one

of the wettest places on Earth; when it rains, the rivers flood, cutting off inhabitants from other places. For hundreds of years, the area’s Indigenous people have turned to nature for a solution, creating bridges out of the aerial roots of trees. Here, a boy learns from an experienced elder how to guide the new roots from the ficus trees into the existing structure of intertwined branches, roots, and bamboo scaffolds that form jingkieng jri—living-root bridges high in the tree canopy that span hundreds of feet across rivers. As the boy weaves, he notices how the living bridge is home to an ecosystem of flora and fauna. Illustrations depict human hands intertwined among the roots and vines, representing the symbiosis that’s possible when humans care. If tourists litter or drown out nature with noise, the boy invites them to show the bridge some love. Back matter adds context for these natural wonders. A beautiful testament that harmony between humans and nature is possible, even in trying conditions. —*Amina Chaudhri*

Lost and Found in History.

By Clara Booth. Illus. by the author.

2025. 48p. Thames & Hudson, \$19.95 (9780500653500). K-Gr. 3. 909.

Find yourself immersed in a fun and interactive journey through time in this colorful, action-packed title. It invites readers to join two kids and their dog as they travel through history, from ancient Egypt to the Roaring Twenties in New York. The book cleverly combines seek-and-find activities with historical facts and illustrations. In each scene, readers can search for a checklist of hidden people, objects, and events through nine time periods. From the bustling streets of Tudor London to the majestic pyramids of Egypt, every page brings a new adventure. After finding the hidden items, readers are treated to informative facts about the era they have just explored. The book also includes a key for finding the items and people on the checklists, plus a glossary of key terms to extend the learning. Perfect for history lovers and curious minds, this book makes learning about the past exciting and accessible. Booth’s playful writing and vibrant illustrations will keep kids entertained while they discover fascinating moments that have shaped our world. —*Alana Jara*

My Pollinator Garden: How I Plant for Bees, Butterflies, Beetles, and More.

By Jordan Zwetckhenbaum. Illus. by Kate Cosgrove.

May 2025. 40p. Holiday, \$18.99 (9780823454983). PreS-K. 582.0166.

Teeming with information about pollinators and the plants they rely on, this softly illustrated guide offers a wealth of information for aspiring gardeners. Cosgrove’s expressive, richly colorful artwork is stylized enough that it avoids looking like a field guide while still rendering plants, animals, and insects with enough identifying detail that they’re easily recognizable. The text flits from pollinator to

pollinator, spending lots of time on bees; refreshingly, Zwetckhenbaum showcases a wide variety of native bees, including green sweat bees and the tiny eight-spotted fairy bee. Each pollinator appears near its companion plant; hummingbirds, who see mostly red, hover near wild columbine, while flies attracted to the smell of rotting meat land on a red trillium. It's an easygoing, inviting presentation of an increasingly popular and essential topic in gardening; native plants and their pollinators are an essential part of sustainable ecological balance. Robust back matter elaborates on the wider concepts presented here and offers advice on caring for a pollinator garden. Important, fact-filled information in an appealingly pretty package. —*Sarah Hunter*

Ray: How Light Works.

By Emily Kate Moon. Illus. by the author.

June 2025. 40p. Dial, \$18.99 (9780593857984). K-Gr. 3. 535.

Ray, a personified ball of light energy, embarks on an exciting journey through space in this brilliant addition to the Science Pals series. Since the “beginning of time,” light has made life on our planet possible. Alongside friends Puff (air) and Drop (water), Ray and his companions “power life on Earth.” Ray zooms at the speed of light (“186,000 miles per second!!”) from the Sun to Earth’s oceans, influencing weather patterns, sustaining animals and plants, and even reaching the deepest parts of the oceans and beneath the surface of the soil. The smiling faces, hand-lettered witty captions, and bright, cutesy illustrations will appeal to science-minded early readers. However, Moon doesn’t shy away from advanced scientific concepts such as the electromagnetic spectrum. Every part of the book is packed with fascinating facts and tidbits of information; even the endpapers delve into the science behind light, fusion, sources of light, and energy sources on Earth. Kids with lots of questions about how things work will appreciate Moon’s inviting approach. —*Rachel Chapman*

Sea in My Cells.

By Laura Alary. Illus. by Andrea Blinick.

May 2025. 32p. Pajama, \$18.95 (9781772783421). K-Gr. 2. 551.48.

A young girl is encouraged to drink a nice cool glass of water because she needs to put the sea into her cells. The sea in her cells? What? This picture book explains how human bodies are made of cells and that every cell needs water. This water comes from cool breezes that gather moisture over the oceans, which turns into clouds that float over mountains, eventually condensing into heavy raindrops that fall to Earth, where they’re collected and piped into homes and gush out to fill glasses for thirsty people. These water drops might have fallen on woolly mammoths or drenched rain forests, and once they’re returned to the earth and the rivers and the seas, the process starts all over again. Charming illustrations support this simple but effective explanation of the water cycle, including cutaways of un-

derground cartoon mice doing laundry and enjoying office watercoolers. This engaging offering comes from the same team that produced *Sun in My Tummy* (2023), a cheerful exploration of the food chain. We have another winner. —*Kathleen McBroom*

Seven Skies All at Once.

By Ted Kooser. Illus. by Matt Myers.

July 2025. 32p. Candlewick, \$18.99 (978153629004).

K-Gr. 2. 551.6.

In a fresh and breezy addition to the shelf of rainstorm-themed picture books, clouds scurry across darkening skies and the wind rises. Myers depicts two children exchanging waves, calls, and notes from atop realistically detailed urban apartment buildings separated by a street but linked by a hastily emptied clothesline. The apartment dwellers aren’t the only ones with laundry, however. “The skies had hung out their freshly washed clouds to dry,” Kooser begins, extending the motif as signs of oncoming rain prompt one sky to unpin “damp sheets of cirrus” from a contrail, another visible from a different angle to carry off “great armloads of altocumulus,” and further skies to sweep other types of clouds out of the way of a “huge cumulonimbus” that at last plumps down over the city to drop its watery load. One brief, refreshing shower later, the skies leave behind “a green laundry basket with a handle that looked like”—and actually is, in the final scene, arcing brightly and gracefully over that clothesline—“a rainbow.” A meteorological masterpiece, both playful and adeptly crafted. —*John Peters*

So Many Years: A Juneteenth Story.

By Anne Wynter. Illus. by Jerome Pumphrey.

May 2025. 32p. Clarion, \$19.99 (9780063081147).

PreS-Gr. 3. 394.263.

What does Juneteenth mean to different generations? That is the overarching question Wynter’s newest picture book considers. Through simple queries, readers are asked to imagine how African Americans would celebrate freedom after years of enslavement. Vibrant acrylic illustrations painted on hardwood panels juxtapose various aspects of slavery, such as eating food scraps, with joyful Juneteenth festivities, including people throwing parties with delicious food. Each celebration takes place in a different time period and is connected by the universal theme of celebrating freedom. As the holiday gatherings build to the present time, the story revisits the first generation of freed African Americans, remembering everything this day honors and appreciating the simple everyday joys that freedom brings. Back matter includes the history of Juneteenth and the lyrics of “Lift Every Voice and Sing.” *So Many Years* provides a thought-provoking and easy-to-understand message that teaches even the youngest readers why Juneteenth is a cause for celebration. Pair with Tonya Duncan Ellis’ *They Built Me for Freedom* (2024) for another accessible history of Juneteenth. —*Ashley Leffel*

The Traveling Taco: The Amazing and Surprising Journey of Many of Your Favorite Foods.

By Mia Wenjen. Illus. by Kimberlie Clinthorne-Wong.

May 2025. 36p. Red Comet, \$19.99 (9781636551319).

Gr. 1-3. 641.

In buoyant prose that occasionally breaks into rhyme, Wenjen dishes up savory profiles of a dozen popular foods that have traveled, including the al pastor taco, a descendant of shawarma, brought to Mexico by Lebanese immigrants; cheesecake, apparently known to the ancient Greeks; and British fish and chips, described by Thomas Jefferson as “fish in the Jewish fashion.” An assertion that the founder of London’s first fish-and-chip shop in 1863 was fleeing the Portuguese Inquisition seems half-baked, but Wenjen does rightly acknowledge that, when it comes to food origins, there are conflicting claims: “Between France and Belgium, French fries cause tension. / Both think that fries are their country’s invention.” The author gives as much attention to preparation and distinctive ingredients as she does to history, so budding chefs will come away, for instance, with a sense of what’s in jerk marinade as well as knowing that it was invented by the Caribbean Taino. Clinthorne-Wong’s stylized montages of fresh ingredients, finished dishes, and small figures in period dress add further lively flavor to this cross-cultural culinary cruise. —*John Peters*

What Fish Are Saying: Strange Sounds in the Ocean.

By Kirsten Pendreigh. Illus. by Katie Melrose.

June 2025. 40p. Sourcebooks/eXplore, \$18.99

(9781464218965). K-Gr. 3. 578.4.

From an overhead view of boaters floating in a kayak, Pendreigh marvels at the calm, asking on the next spread, “Is under water peaceful too?” The answer, imparted in (sometimes awkward) rhymes, is a definite no: underwater microphones have picked up noises huge and tiny from water dwellers. Kids will delight in learning that, “while some fish CHIRP / and others BARK / salmon BURP . . . / and herring FART!” (Adults likely will have to explain how one statement—that loud bubbles shot out by shrimp are “hot as the sun”—is for fun.) Some of the physics of underwater sound is helpfully explained, with Pendreigh noting that sound travels farther than light or smell in water. Environmental lessons can spring from the fascinating fact that when fish are played sounds from healthy reefs, they swim to damaged areas and help them recover—information offered in a non-rhyming closing section (though no source notes are listed). This is jaunty coverage of a less-discussed topic, accompanied by realistic, bright, digitally rendered images of fish and their habitat. The unusual sounds chronicled will make it a hit read-aloud. —*Henrietta Thornton*

Continuing SERIES NONFICTION SHOWCASE



All Families Series. Focus/Beacon. Gr. 3–5. (6 new titles)

Grandparent Families. By Connor Stratton. 2025. 32p. illus. lib. ed., \$21.95 (9798889983903). 640.

Interfaith Families. By Connor Stratton. 2025. 32p. illus. lib. ed., \$21.95 (9798889983910). 640.

Military Families. By Connor Stratton. 2025. 32p. illus. lib. ed., \$21.95 (9798889983927). 640.

Multiracial Families. By Connor Stratton. 2025. 32p. illus. lib. ed., \$21.95 (9798889983934). 640.

Nowadays, the concept of the nuclear family isn't the Norman Rockwell-image it once was. As the definition of family has broadened and grown, so has the need for nonfiction that focuses on the diversity of family experiences. Each title in the All Families series begins with a snapshot of a child's life in a particular family unit before delving into the characteristics of that family type and challenges that these children might face—not to mention the strengths such environments can foster. The texts take care to validate children's feelings and emphasize that communication is integral to healthy family dynamics. *Grandparent Families* explains that in "grandfamilies," grandparents are primary caregivers for children whose parents are no longer able to support them, whether due to death or circumstance. *Interfaith Families* opens with a girl excited to celebrate both Easter and Ramadan with her Christian-Muslim family. *Military Families* differentiates between life when a parent is working at a base and life when that parent is deployed. In *Multiracial Families*, race is clearly defined as a social construct tied to culture and ethnicity and racism is plainly addressed, but so is the pride often felt by those with multiracial identities. Reading-comprehension exercises conclude all volumes, and standard back matter includes a link to the publisher's online educational resources. A refreshing approach for today's readers. —Julie Goldschmied

How Do? Series. Flowerpot. Gr. 2–5. (2 new titles)

How Do Fires Protect Nature? A Book about Fire Ecology. By Dinyar Minocher. Illus. by Srimalie Bassani. 2025. 40p. \$12.99 (9781486731121). 577.2.

How Do Seeds Grow into Gardens? A Hands-On Book about Gardening. By Clayton Tobias Grider. Illus. by Srimalie Bassani. 2025. 36p. \$12.99 (9781486731091). 635.

The two newest books in the How Do? series introduce children to gardening and to the traditional and present-day uses of controlled fires to restore ecosystems. Both topics could be considered complex, but the text and colorful illustrations in each book present their subject in a straightforward, helpful, and appealing way. In *How Do Fires Protect Nature?*, Minocher discusses the usefulness of fires to keep prairie

and forest floors from becoming overgrown, shaded, and dominated by large plants. Controlled fires, preceded by careful planning and managed by fire experts to avoid unwanted destruction, often benefit individual species as well as complex ecosystems. In the closing pages, the text invites children to take part in an outdoor scavenger hunt, with a checklist of activities such as "Find a water source (pond, stream, water hose, etc.). What are two different ways this water source could help protect against a fire?" *How Do Seeds Grow into Gardens?* explores basic topics, such as seeds, dirt, water, and useful gardening tools. Along the way, it discusses the importance of considering the temperature and sunlight plants need, the benefits of pairing certain plants, and dealing with garden pests. Grider explores the challenges of gardening and includes practical tips and encouragement for kids who are interested in growing their own plants. Two attractive additions to this lively series. —Carolyn Phelan

If You Were a Kid Series. Scholastic/Children's Press. Gr. 2–4. (4 new titles)

If You Were a Kid at Ellis Island. By Joana Costa Knufinke. Illus. by Leo Trinidad. 2025. 32p. lib. ed., \$26 (9781546136255). 304.8.

If You Were a Kid at the Declaration of Independence. By Sonia W. Black. Illus. by Leo Trinidad. 2025. 32p. lib. ed., \$26 (9781546136163). 973.313.

If You Were a Kid at the March on Washington. By Aaron Talley and Josh Gregory. Illus. by Ana Latase. 2025. 32p. lib. ed., \$26 (9781546136224). 323.1196.

If You Were a Kid at the Signing of the Constitution. By Janel Rodriguez. Illus. by Makenzie McCarthy. 2025. 32p. lib. ed., \$26 (9781546136194). 973.318.

The If You Were a Kid series takes a creative look at historically significant events. Lively fictional characters, ostensibly typical of their time, experience highlighted moments in history, allowing readers to envision the events. Siblings from Italy drive the story in *If You Were a Kid at Ellis Island*, which explores immigration in twentieth-century America. *If You Were a Kid at the Declaration of Independence* sketches a picture of colonial life as three young friends conspire to trick British soldiers in their town. In *If You Were a Kid at the March on Washington*, Black siblings witness social change when their family participates in this monumental, peaceful protest in 1963. A pair of youngsters in *If You Were a Kid at the Signing of the Constitution* saves the day by chasing a spy from the grounds of the Constitutional Convention. The series uses clear but gentle language when addressing adversity, such as deportation on Ellis Island, slavery, and segregation in America, and eloquent glossaries spotlight oppression-related terms. Digital cartoon illustrations will appeal to young readers, but the photos of artifacts featured in fact-filled sidebars truly impress. Each book includes a thorough time line and a map unique to the story. This imaginative combination of story, facts, and realistic artifacts will readily engage elementary-school readers. —Deidre Winterhalter

Native Rights Series. Lerner. Gr. 3–6. (4 new titles)

★ **Indigenous Language Revitalization:** From Boarding Schools and Code Talkers to Immersion Learning. By Katrina M. Phillips. illus. lib. ed., \$22.99 (9798765646915). 497.071.

★ **Native Hunting and Fishing:** Practicing Traditions and Defending Treaty Rights. By Katrina M. Phillips. 2025. 32p. illus. lib. ed., \$22.99 (9798765646908). 342.7308.

★ **Native Lands and Sacred Places:** Reclaiming and Protecting Native Lands. By Cayla Bellanger DeGroat. 2025. 32p. illus. lib. ed., \$22.99 (9798765646922). 299.7.

★ **Water Is Life:** The Ongoing Fight for Indigenous Water Rights. By Katrina M. Phillips. 2025. 32p. illus. lib. ed., \$22.99 (9798765646939). 346.04.

The Native Rights series makes complicated issues facing Indigenous peoples today more accessible for young readers. Each volume is written by an Indigenous author and presents a specific infringement of rights through several chapters of straightforward text. *Indigenous*

Language Revitalization describes how boarding schools once stripped Native Americans of their language and culture, how Native languages aided the Allies in the World Wars, and ways that revitalization movements are helping Indigenous nations save their endangered languages. *Native Hunting and Fishing* explains Native Americans' historic relationship with their lands to provide food for their communities and explores how broken U.S. treaties denied these peoples the right to hunt and fish until Indigenous activism restored these rights. *Native Lands and Sacred Places* highlights historic lands and sites that have been sacred to Indigenous peoples; the Reservation Era, in which Native Americans were forced onto reservations; and later laws built on "the trust responsibility," meaning the U.S. government has a responsibility to protect Native lands. *Water Is Life* centers on the importance of water in Native cultures, the seizure of Native land and water by the U.S. government, and historic and continuing activism to secure access to and protect clean water. Historic and modern-day photos, reproductions, maps, and other visuals depict the time periods and geographic range of these ongoing struggles for rights. A timely and essential series. —*Angela Leeper*

Opposing Viewpoints Series. Greenhaven. Gr. 7–12. (6 new titles)

Antisemitism and Islamophobia. By Lisa Idzikowski. 2025. 176p. illus. lib. ed., \$40.43 (9781534509924). 305.89.

Identity Politics. By Martin Gidlin. 2025. 176p. illus. lib. ed., \$40.43 (9781534509962). 305.

Intellectual Property and Artificial Intelligence. By Gary Wiener. 2025. 176p. illus. lib. ed., \$40.43 (9781534509986). 006.3.

Systemic Oppression. By Avery Elizabeth Hurt. 2025. 176p. illus. lib. ed., \$50.43 (9781534510029). 362.

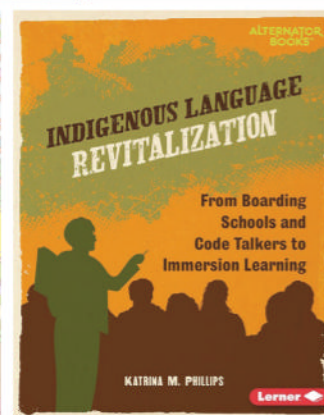
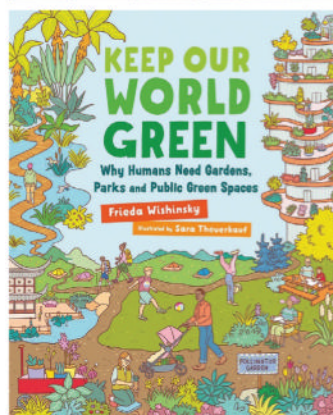
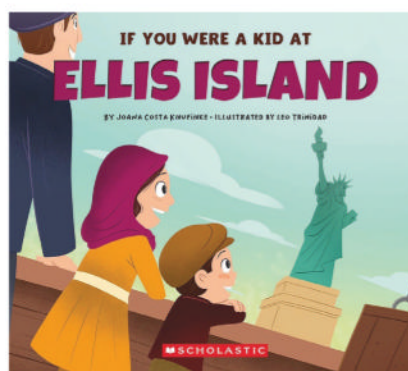
The venerable *Opposing Viewpoints* series presents diverse opinions on national affairs, making it a longtime favorite resource for researchers and debate teams. Additionally, the introduction to each book asserts the series' value as a literacy tool, highlighting how the close reading of nuanced text and its supporting documentation aids in reading comprehension. These recent titles don't shy away from controversial issues, and they follow an established format: brief, themed essays by assorted authors that are introduced by pre-reading prompts and supported by notes and references. *Antisemitism and Islamophobia* considers how world events shape religious bigotry in the U.S. and influence American politics, discusses if media reports lead to unrealistic portrayals of radicalization and extremism, and proposes solutions for eradicating antisemitism and Islamophobia in the future. *Identity Politics* profiles factions in American history and considers to what extent social media contributes to polarization and resulting influences on political and social change. *Intellectual Property and Artificial Intelligence* poses questions regarding intellectual property, plagiarism, impacts on creative arts and the entertainment industry, and proposed regulation of deepfakes. *Systemic Oppression* examines approaches to eliminating discriminatory practices in housing, education, health care, criminal justice, and voting rights. This valuable resource has applications across curricular areas and challenges readers to consider multiple viewpoints, analyze information, and create informed decisions—skills that will last a lifetime. —*Kathleen McBroom*

Orca Timelines Series. Orca. Gr. 4–8. (2 new titles)

★ **Keep Our World Green:** Why Humans Need Gardens, Parks and Public Green Spaces. By Frieda Wishinsky. Illus. by Sara Theuerkauf. 2025. 96p. \$29.95 (9781459838383). 333.78.

★ **Making a Splash:** How Humans Consume, Control and Care for Water. By Colleen Nelson. Illus. by Sophie Dubé. 2025. 96p. \$29.95 (9781459838697). 553.7.

Each book in the Orca Timelines series explores a topic through a wide lens, considering the subject's history, current standing, and applications around the globe. This holistic approach contextualizes the topic and takes the main text in interesting and sometimes unexpected directions. The books' visually dynamic layouts use de-



tailed cartoon illustrations while also weaving in high quality photos and maps that will keep readers engaged. *Keep Our World Green* examines the importance of green spaces, from how they benefit the health of people and the environment to ways they inspire artists to their roles in building communities. Readers will learn about parks and gardens throughout history, including Egyptian gardens (circa 3000 BCE), Venetian gardens (1545), and New York City's Central Park. The title also addresses climate change and ways that people can make a difference locally. *Making a Splash* takes a deep dive into humans' relationship with water as a resource. Topics covered include the importance of water in urban planning, agriculture, spirituality, and climate change, as well as the global issue of water vulnerability. Readers will learn new vocabulary while discovering ways people around the world are working to preserve clean water for all and maintain the health of aquatic ecosystems. These thorough and timely titles will make excellent additions to any library collection. —*Reilly Grant*

Smithsonian: Informational Text Series. Teacher Created Materials. Gr. 4–7. (12 new titles)

All about Clouds. By Elise Wallace. 2025. 32p. illus. paper, \$12.99 (9798765968949). 551.5.

All about Hurricanes. By Ann McCallum Staats. 2025. 32p. illus. paper, \$12.99 (9798765968956). 551.55.

Ocean Trenches and Deep-Sea Life. By Lisa Perlman Greathouse. 2025. 32p. illus. paper, \$12.99 (9798765968918). 551.46.

Wildfires. By Georgia Beth. 2025. 32p. illus. paper, \$12.99 (9798765968758). 634.961.

The Smithsonian: Informational Text series connects readers with engaging STEM topics created by teachers and vetted by Smithsonian researchers. Each title explains the science behind its given subject with high-quality images, clear and engaging infographics, and fun-fact boxes. *All about Clouds* will have readers identifying cloud formations and weather phenomena like meteorologists. *All about Hurricanes* brings natural disasters and catastrophic weather patterns to the palms of your hands, no matter your geographical climate zone. *Ocean Trenches and Deep-Sea Life* shines a light on some of the mysteries of our planet's oceans, from seafloor exploratory technologies to complex

geological concepts to the unusual creatures that inhabit the deep-sea floor. In *Wildfires*, readers learn the chemistry behind fire and how to stay safe around flames, how to start and stop fires, and when and how humans and nature have used fire to maintain land. A STEAM challenge, glossary, reading-comprehension questions, and career advice with quotes from Smithsonian researchers will inspire budding scientists interested in learning more. These titles would be well suited to science classrooms and will satisfy curious young minds in school and public libraries. —*Rachel Chapman*

Spot the Difference Series. Jump!/Bullfrog. K–Gr. 3. (6 new titles)

Chipmunk or Squirrel? By Lily Austen. 2025. 24p. illus. lib. ed., \$26.99 (9798892136754). 599.36.

Goose or Duck? By Natalie Deniston. 2025. 24p. illus. lib. ed., \$20.99 (9798892136815). 598.4.

Octopus or Squid? By Natalie Deniston. 2025. 24p. illus. lib. ed., \$20.99 (9798892136846). 594.

Wolverine or Badger? By Jenna Lee Gleisner. 2025. 24p. illus. lib. ed., \$20.99 (9798892136907). 599.76.

Little ones learn defining characteristics of animal look-alikes in the Spot the Difference series. First, readers meet the two stars of their book, each in its own full-page photo with a simple, identifying sentence (“This is a . . .”). Both creatures have similar appearances, but, in the double-page spreads that follow, readers are challenged to identify which animal is pictured, based on a newly shared fact. For instance, kids perusing *Chipmunk or Squirrel?* must determine which rodent they’re looking at after being told, “Squirrels have bushy tails. Chipmunks do not.” In *Goose or Duck?* the length of the bird’s neck is the giveaway. Readers of *Octopus or Squid?* will be counting appendages after learning that while both cephalopods have eight arms, only squid also possess two tentacles. A snowy snoot in *Wolverine or Badger?* tells youngsters what they need to know upon reading, “It is winter. Badgers stay in. Wolverines go out. Which is this?” Six such queries appear in each book, and the answer is always printed upside-down on the same spread. Titles are rounded out with labeled diagrams of their featured animals, a page of comparative quick facts, and a picture glossary. The guessing-game format will keep young learners engaged, while the simple sentences and vocabulary are appropriate for newly independent readers looking to challenge their literacy skills. —*Julia Smith*

Unofficial Guides Series. Cherry Lake. Gr. 9–12. (4 new titles)

Fortnite: Year Eight. By Josh Gregory. 2025. 32p. illus. lib. ed., \$23.45 (9781668956434). 794.85.

Forza: Beginner’s Guide. By Josh Gregory. 2025. 32p. illus. lib. ed., \$23.45 (9781668956458). 794.85.

Genshin Impact: Beginner’s Guide. By Josh Gregory. 2025. 32p. illus. lib. ed., \$23.45 (9781668956441). 794.85.

Stardew Valley: Beginner’s Guide. By Josh Gregory. 2025. 32p. illus. lib. ed., \$23.45 (9781668956427). 794.85.

Video games are a fun way to disconnect, but frustration can creep in if players get stuck on a difficult level or find themselves unable to defeat a troublesome boss. The colorful, immersive books in the Unofficial Guides series provide expert tips on gameplay while offering readers a dash of history on each game’s cultural impact. The books excel in delivering in-depth strategies and step-by-step instructions with bright images straight from the featured games, which will help readers visualize how to conquer game challenges. They also break down game mechanics, offer tips, and reveal hidden strategies that help players better their skills. *Fortnite* offers the latest battle tactics to tackle the game’s fights. *Forza* teaches players how to master racing techniques and customize the perfect vehicle. In *Genshin Impact*, players will be guided through character builds, elemental strategies, and team compositions. *Stardew Valley* contains insights about farming, relationships, and resource management. With clear visuals and easy-to-follow instructions, these books transform gaming

knowledge into an engaging experience, allowing players to sharpen their skills and become more competitive. Whether you’re aiming to dominate battle royales, perfect your drifting, optimize elemental reactions, or create the ultimate farm, these guides will level-up your gaming skills. —*Aurora Dominquez*

War Histories Series. Bellwether/Torque. Gr. 3–7. (4 new titles)

The Gulf War. By Alex Monroe. 2025. 24p. illus. lib. ed., \$20.97 (9798893042726). 956.7.

The Korean War. By Kieran Downs. 2025. 24p. illus. lib. ed., \$20.97 (9798893042733). 951.9.

The War of 1812. By Alex Monroe. 2025. 24p. illus. lib. ed., \$20.97 (9798893042740). 973.52.

The War on Terror. By Alex Monroe. 2025. 24p. illus. lib. ed., \$20.97 (9798893042757). 363.325.

The fast-paced War Histories series delivers essential overviews of major conflicts and wars in an engaging high/low format. Each book is dynamically illustrated with photos, maps, infographics, and time lines about the war in question. Quick profiles of leaders on each side of the war are included, as are mentions of heroes, generals, and other key figures. Readers will come to understand the causes, major conflicts, final results, and aftermath of each war. *The Gulf War* reveals that Iraq sparked the Gulf War by invading Kuwait, prompting over 30 countries, including the U.S., to come to Kuwait’s aid in a coalition called Operation Desert Storm. *The Korean War* informs the readers about the ongoing suffering in Korea following WWII and the division caused by the different governments and ideologies of its residents and occupying countries. *The War of 1812* delivers information about James Madison and the conflicts and alliances among the British, Americans, and Native Americans. *The War on Terror* explains how this war began with al Qaeda’s attacks on 9/11 and lasted until the withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan in August 2021. Students interested in domestic and international military history will find these books exciting first stops on their learning journey. —*Alana Jara*

Who Made My Lunch? Series. Amicus Learning. Gr. 1–3. (4 new titles)

From Corn to Cereal. By Mari C. Schuh. Illus. by Jeanine Murch. 2025. 24p. lib. ed., \$25.95 (9798892001090). 664.

From Grove to Fruit Salad. By Mari C. Schuh. Illus. by Jeanine Murch. 2025. 24p. lib. ed., \$25.95 (9798892001106). 641.3.

From Potato to Chip. By Mari C. Schuh. Illus. by Jeanine Murch. 2025. 24p. lib. ed., \$25.95 (9798892001113). 664.

From Wheat to Pasta. By Mari C. Schuh. Illus. by Jeanine Murch. 2025. 24p. lib. ed., \$25.95 (9798892001120). 664.

These cheerful new books in the Who Made My Lunch? series explore the process of growing, processing, and bringing to market several popular types of food. *From Corn to Cereal* tracks the production of corn flakes from planting corn to the harvest, mill, and cereal factory. *From Grove to Fruit Salad* covers how oranges, strawberries, apples, and bananas are grown, harvested, stored, and shipped. *From Potato to Chip* follows potatoes from the fields to the harvest and the steps needed to prepare chips at a factory. *From Wheat to Pasta* focuses on durum wheat, which becomes semolina and then pasta, with extra-charming illustrations of pasta shapes spewing from a factory machine. For the most part, the text is clear and simply written, with several sentences on each page or spread, although the author occasionally drops in a complex scientific term, for example, “ethylene gas,” which helps bananas ripen. Large, colorful illustrations give the volumes a picture-book feel and provide a friendly and appealing introduction to a variety of farms, factories, and methods of shipping. The obligatory back matter is relevant: a world map showing where the key crop or crops are grown, a brief glossary of topic-specific words, and several print and digital resources about the topic. These books will keep readers’ attention as they learn more about the foods they eat. —*Miriam Aronin*

Youth Fiction

Older Readers



All-Nighter. By Cecilia Vinesse.

May 2025. 384p. HarperCollins/Quill Tree, \$19.99 (9780063285927). Gr. 8–12.



Seniors Autumn Povitsky and Tara Esposito are sworn enemies. Ever since a failed attempt by Autumn to welcome newcomer Tara to the all-girls school by way of stumbling through their anti-smoking policy, the two have antagonized each other nonstop. Valedictorian Autumn has a penchant for rules and ruling the school with an iron fist, and Tara is a certified bad girl determined to fill her time with pranks and noncompliant mischief. But fate is fickle, and Autumn needs Tara's help breaking the rules by attaining a student ID for the local college so she can see her crush read poetry at 2 a.m. What could go wrong? Not too much, but just enough as the duo navigates Autumn's twin brother's prom night, a flash mob, a secret roller-skating party, sunrise ocean dives, and more. In an all-in-one-night whirlwind with plot-relevant flashbacks, this sapphic rom-com jumps between the two girls' perspectives, always picking up where the other left off with amusing perspectives. In this work that is loaded with pop-culture references (that may eventually date the work), Vinesse has captured not just a great will-they-won't-they enemies tension, she's also effectively encapsulated how goodbyes aren't forever and connection with others can help a post-graduation future seem less scary. —*Kelly Ferreira*

The Complex Art of Being Maisie Clark. By Sabrina Kleckner.

June 2025. 288p. Flux, paper, \$14.99 (9781631639203). Gr. 9–12.

Kleckner introduced the character of Maisie Clark in *The Art of Running Away* (2021); in this stand-alone sequel, she's six years older and ready to take a leap into the unknown. After years working at her parents' portrait shop and recreating her father's style, she realizes something is missing: her own style. Determined to find her own artistic voice, she leaves home and enrolls in art school in London—all changes she never thought she'd be brave enough to make. Her journey is full of realistically messy moments; from homesickness to difficult classes to awkward social dynamics, she gradually finds herself. When her classmate breaks his ankle and she volunteers to cover his side job teaching art classes for the elderly, her eyes are opened to important, meaningful lessons. Kleckner beautifully captures Maisie's emotional landscape in her bright personality and bantery voice, as well as the touching conversations that help her

begin to believe in herself. With themes of self-discovery, bravery, and starting over, this story will stick with readers past its ending. —*Aurora Dominguez*

Costumes for Time Travelers.

By A. R. Capetta.

May 2025. 224p. Candlewick, \$18.99 (9781536233711). Gr. 8–12.

In this slim but ambitious time-travel adventure fantasy, the town of Pocket exists outside of time. There, Calisto apprentices at their grandmother's costume shop, where they tailor clothing for travelers visiting every era of human history. Their peaceful existence is upended by the appearance of the notorious time savant Fawkes, whose mysterious connection to Calisto draws them into a whirlwind romp through Elizabethan England, ancient Crete, and 1990s California. As Calisto and Fawkes uncover a threat to their time line from the sinister Time Wardens, they discover their own temporal powers and a love that could save their home—and all of time. Capetta (*The Heartbreak Bakery*, 2021) head-hops between the leads even as the characters time-hop around, putting the focus more on Calisto and Fawkes' journey and romance than the underlying world building. This, bolstered by a diversely—and understatedly—queer cast, makes for a fast and fun ride that should appeal to readers in search of a lighthearted high-concept fantasy. —*Ronny Khuri*



Eliza, from Scratch. By Sophia Lee.

May 2025. 320p. HarperCollins/Quill Tree, \$19.99 (9780063372634). Gr. 9–12.



Eliza Park is a good student; she's gifted and willing to put in the work over her high-school career to clinch salutatorian status. But at the start of senior year, a schedule snafu occurs, and she winds up in culinary arts, a class that not only lacks GPA weighting but also highlights her distinct lack of culinary skills. After she's paired up with the immediately annoying Wesley Ruengsomboon on a group project, she embarks on cooking lessons with her mom, who's mourning the loss of Eliza's grandmother. Eliza and Wesley are each angling to win the class cook-off at the end of the semester, but the longer they spend in the kitchen together, the more attraction grows between them. Over the course of the book, Eliza learns not just how to cook her grandmother's traditional Korean recipes with a twist but also how to interact with her grieving mother and maybe even how to think about herself in a new way. Wesley's passion for cooking inspires Eliza, and the

book is full of tantalizing cooking scenes sure to entice the most kitchen-wary of readers. In the kitchen, Wesley and Eliza each teach the other important lessons and have impactful conversations about their Asian American identities and relationships with their families. Lee's delicious debut will surely satiate readers. —*Karis Rogerson*

A First Time for Everything.

By K. L. Walther.

June 2025. 416p. Sourcebooks, paper, \$14.99 (9781728263144). Gr. 9–12.

Mads has always been close with her family of her brother and her two dads, so when her brother gets engaged without involving them, she's seriously thrown off balance. She loves her brother, though, so she's determined to mend the gap and agrees to be a bridesmaid, even though she's a bit skeptical of her soon-to-be sister-in-law. Throughout the year leading up to the wedding, Mads stumbles into her own journey of self-discovery, dealing with crushes, evolving friendships, and some important realizations about her feelings that lead to her truly finding her own voice and bravery to express herself. Walther's sweet, heartfelt, and warm novel blends a compelling family story with an undercurrent of romance; throughout the whole novel, the theme of accepting change and stepping into the future, even if it feels scary, touches just about every character. Teens who like introspective, character-driven stories will find plenty of relatable moments in Mads' story. A cozy embrace of a novel that perfectly captures the feeling of facing life-changing experiences head-on. —*Aurora Dominguez*

Get Real, Chloe Torres.

By Crystal Maldonado.

May 2025. 240p. Holiday, \$19.99 (9780823452378). Gr. 9–12.

What could be more fun than going on a road trip to see your favorite band in Las Vegas for your birthday? Inviting your two estranged best friends on the trip in an attempt to heal the friendship, of course! Eighteen-year-old Chloe Torres is going away to art college in the fall and wishes she could fix things with her long-term best friends. Their friendship fell apart because Chloe had a crush on Ramona, but Sienna, their other friend, kissed Chloe. Maldonado crafts a fun and heartfelt ode to queer teenage friendships between women, boy bands, and the unique bonding experience of road trips. Romance in this novel takes a back seat to the true central relationships, which are the friendships, including Chloe's friendship with her cousin Diego. The 2002 teen flick *Crossroads* meets Maureen Johnson's *The Bermudez Triangle* (2004) in this work about the ways that friendships change and evolve, fat positivity, Latine identity, and the bitter-sweet experience of growing up. Maldonado packs so much heart and queer joy into one getting-the-band-back-together-style road trip. —*Fin Leary*



High-Demand Hot List for Youth

Look for reviews of these high-demand titles in forthcoming issues of *Booklist*.

Dream On. By Shannon Hale. Art by Marcela Cespedes and Lark Pien. Roaring Brook, \$22.99 (9781250843067). Gr. 3–6. Aug.

Cassie, tired of sharing a room with her siblings, thinks winning a sweepstakes is the answer to her problems in this inaugural title in a new middle-grade comics series from best-selling, beloved Hale.

Family Feast! By Carole Boston Weatherford. Illus. by Frank Morrison. Crown, \$18.99 (9780593898291). PreS–Gr. 3. Sept.

With a bowing shelf of awards between them, Weatherford and Morrison join forces for this lively, lyrical story of a family working together to prepare a delicious meal for a crowd.

The House of Quiet. By Kiersten White. Delacorte, \$19.99 (9780593806579). Gr. 9–12. Sept.

Best-selling White's eerie latest follows Birdie, who's determined to follow her sister to the unsettling House of Quiet, a home for children burdened with unwieldy powers.

The House that Floated. By Guojing. Illus. by the author. Random House Studio, \$18.99 (9780593709054). PreS–Gr. 3. Sept.

Critically acclaimed illustrator Guojing offers another evocative, emotional picture book, this time about a family that must move its house from its place on a seaside cliff.

I Wish I Didn't Have to Tell You This. By Eugene Yelchin. Art by the author. Candlewick, \$22.99 (9781536215533). Gr. 9–12. Sept.

Yelchin follows up his 2021 memoir, *The Genius under the Table*, with this account of his attempts to leave the USSR to seek freedom overseas—and the drastic measures he took to do so.

If We Were Dogs. By Sophie Blackall. Illus. by the author. Little, Brown, \$18.99 (9780316581721). PreS–Gr. 2. Sept.

Blackall, winner of multiple Caldecott medals, brings her signature style to this winsome story about a pair of friends imagining what kind of animals they'd be.

The Last Resort. By Erin Entrada Kelly. Scholastic, \$17.99 (9781546132431). Gr. 3–6. Sept.

Newbery-winning Kelly's latest, about a tween investigating a death in a haunted mansion with the help of some ghosts, incorporates an integrated app that expands on the story. A planned sequel will be written by Jasmine Warga.

The Grove.

By Brooks Whitney Phillips.

June 2025. 304p. Viking, \$19.99 (9780593202128). Gr. 8–11.

Two sisters navigate poverty and parental neglect on an orange grove in 1960s Florida. Pip, 15, is the novel's sensitive, naive narrator who escapes by writing stories. Sissy, 17, pores over fashion magazines. Their father is a fourth-generation grove man; he can imagine no other life, even though his wife despises Juicy Acres. Every day brings hard work, and the sisters are “white trash” outcasts at school. When the circus comes to town, Sissy is seduced and then discarded by a dashing sword-swallower. She becomes distant and mean, so Pip turns to Silas for companionship. Silas, a sweet, hardworking orphan, was abandoned in the grove as a young boy. He shares Pip's deep affinity for the natural world. Today's teens are unlikely to be surprised that Sissy is hiding a pregnancy, and the novel's climax, a great injustice, is perpetrated by a clichéd villain.

Still, readers may be swept up in the spare, beautiful writing, subtle brushstrokes depicting lives of isolation and despair with pinpoint accuracy, and a love between two young people too pure for this world. —*Angela Carstensen*

I Can't Even Think Straight.

By Dean Atta.

May 2025. 304p. HarperCollins/Quill Tree, \$19.99

(9780063158030). Gr. 9–12.

Stonewall Award-winning Atta brings readers a slice-of-life novel in verse that reveals how messy life can be. After a destination summer vacation, Kai is ready to start the school year. Kai is comfortable coming out as a gay man, but his best friend, Matt, is worried his sexuality will be scrutinized as a result. Kai agrees to keep his sexuality a secret until Matt is comfortable coming out, but is that fair to Kai? Throughout the year, Kai is faced with difficult decisions and changing relationships, and it's up to Kai to do what's

best for him. Atta crafts another memorable story about young teens finding themselves, and he perfectly captures the complexity of relationships. Kai has to respond to many difficult situations, and Atta attests that there isn't always a perfect choice for every case. Fans of the author will appreciate the nods to characters in his previous works. No matter how Kai approaches each decision, it's clear that his story is just beginning, and that's the most exciting part. —*Amber Hayes*

If I Could Go Back.

By Briana Johnson.

May 2025. 368p. Peachtree Teen, \$19.99 (9781682637753).

Gr. 9–12.

All Aaliyah Campbell wants is to know that she's worth loving. She was raised by Grandpa Joe, her maternal grandfather, and all her life has only known that her parents, Lena and Quincy, were no good for her. So when she comes across Lena's Facebook profile and wants to reach out, she knows it'll cause problems with her family. Her cousin Ivy is adamant that reaching out would be a mistake. But Aaliyah longs to know why her parents left her with Grandpa Joe all those years ago, and the gnawing desire within her to be told she's worth loving won't let her turn away, no matter the consequences. Johnson's young-adult debut is rich with tight, complicated family bonds, with Aaliyah and Grandpa Joe's relationship as the beating heart of the book. Aaliyah is passionate about running track, and her commitment to her sport and genuine love of it enrich the story. The plot twists and turns throughout Aaliyah's budding relationship with Lena and Quincy, leading to unexpected conclusions. —*Karis Rogerson*

Imposter.

By Cait Levin.

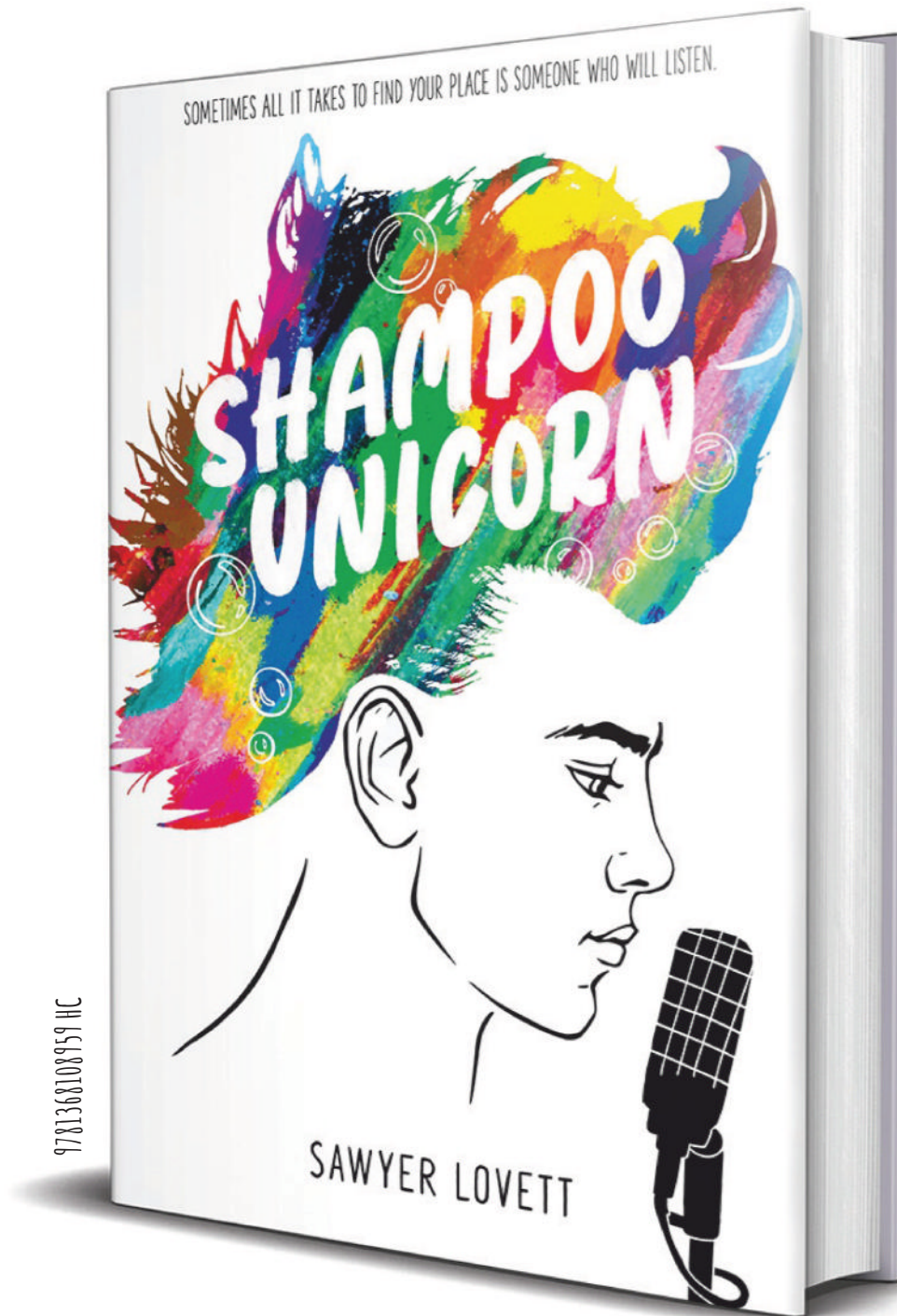
May 2025. 240p. Charlesbridge Teen, \$18.99

(9781623545635). Gr. 7–10.

Sophomore Cam is excited about the computer science class she can finally take. But she is the only girl in the class, and the boys are not shy about letting her know she is not welcome. The teacher barely acknowledges her and does nothing to stop the unpleasantness. Cam is determined to stick it out, especially when she reads about the difficulties women face in STEM fields. She combats her situation by pairing with Jackson, the other sophomore, for a class project, and they create a game that reflects the issues Cam reads about. Then she joins the RoboSub team with her friend Viv. As she expands her skill set, she starts to receive the respect and recognition she deserves. Cam is feisty and fun, even when her imposter syndrome takes hold. Best friend Viv is assertive and confident, especially when she can operate in her wheelhouse, marketing. The other characters are familiar: supportive parents, teachers (both dedicated and not), and boys who can accept a girl into coding. For STEM girls everywhere. —*Donna Scanlon*

SPEAK YOUR TRUTH AND SET THE WORLD ON FIRE!

Sawyer Lovett's powerful and ultimately joyful debut YA novel is about three teens, one podcast, and carving out a rainbow pocket in an otherwise red state.



★ “Lovett’s debut is searing, powerful, and sure to extend a beacon of hope for queer teens across the country.”

—*BOOKLIST*, (STARRED REVIEW)

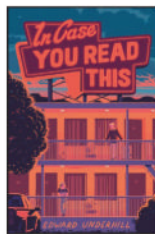
★ “[A] superb debut about queer pride and ‘being seen.’”

—*PUBLISHERS WEEKLY*, (STARRED REVIEW)

HYPERION

★ In Case You Read This.
By Edward Underhill.

May 2025. 368p. HarperCollins/Quill Tree, \$19.99 (9780063373778). Gr. 8–12.



Nebraska roadside motels are not known for their popularity with transgender boys on a cross-country move, but that's where Gabe and Arden intersect for a few hours—just long enough to share their love for the band Damaged Pixie Dream Boi (DPDB). Then they're both back on the road without exchanging numbers or socials, with Arden headed to small-town Michigan and Gabe headed to Pasadena, California. As both boys struggle to adjust to their new environments, they also try their best to find each other somewhere, online, in DPDB fandom spaces. For the first time, Arden's transness makes him a permanent spectacle, while Gabe finds discomfort in a space with people for whom being queer is an overwhelming part of their identity. The juxtaposition allows for an exploration and the validation of a wide spectrum of queer experiences without defining any of them as correct. While the friends Arden makes have depth and mild nuance, Gabe's social struggles are reflected in the lack of complexity of the characters around him. The two alternate POV chapters, with interstitial text exchanges and social media posts, cultivate an even greater investment in what will hopefully be the boys' reunion. This is a timely promise that community is still there for transgender teens to find, be it in SoCal or in a small motel in Nebraska. —*Austin Ferraro*

It's You Every Time.
By Charlene Thomas.

May 2025. 320p. Scholastic, \$12.99 (978154611788). Gr. 7–12.

Sydney Michaels is grieving the loss of her brother the morning of September 24, when she's supposed to be taking a precalc test, which she's expecting to bomb. When she bumps into a charming, handsome stranger, Marcus, while getting breakfast on the way to school, she feels drawn to him enough that, in an out-of-character move, she decides to take the day off to spend it with him. While this seems like it might start off as just a fluffy romance, things take an abrupt turn when, after their sweet day together ends in an unexpected accident, Sydney wakes up on September 24 again. In chapters moving between Sydney's and Marcus' perspectives, the novel gradually reveals why these two characters keep reliving the same day over and over. Thomas explores themes of love, loss, and emotional growth as her characters experience burgeoning love and the importance of finding the strength to move on. A beautiful, heartwarming time-loop romance grounded in two meaningful journeys of emotional growth. —*Aurora Dominguez*

Just Another Meet Cute.
By Jenn P. Nguyen.

May 2025. 336p. Scholastic, paper, \$12.99 (9781339010205). Gr. 8–12.

The only thing better than one meet-cute with a charming boy is a second-chance meet-cute—until you realize there are actually two boys and they're twins. That's what happened to Nina, who ran into Ian on a hiking trail and, in her quest to find him again, saved the life of Ryan. Nina figures she must've remembered Ian's name wrong, and she and Ryan start dating. And then she meets his family, including his twin brother, Ian. With Nina and Ryan together, Ian acts as a nuisance, holding the truth of their first meeting over Nina's head. But the more time she spends with the family, the more confused Nina becomes: does she like Ryan or Ian? Nguyen's third YA novel is romantic and high stakes, leaving readers guessing at who the love interest really is for quite a while. With strong familial relationships also at the fore of the book, the romance isn't the main driving force of this novel. A stressful, yet ultimately satisfying, read for teens of all ages. —*Karis Rogerson*

Let Them Stare.
By Jonathan Van Ness and Julie Murphy.

May 2025. 336p. HarperCollins/Storytide, \$22.99 (9780063346246). Gr. 9–12.

Mary, sis, hunny—it's just a haunted handbag. It might also be Sully's ticket out of Hearst, Pennsylvania, if they can get the ghost, Rufus, to vacate the bag. Like any upstanding ghost, Rufus has unfinished business; he also has a bad case of ghost amnesia, so Sully needs to dig into their small town's history to help Rufus find peace. Their research also makes them realize that, despite being the only nonbinary person in town, Sully might have a place in Hearst after all. Without overwhelming the narrative with exposition, there is a plentiful amount of queer history discussed, dually serving to educate the reader and to help Sully discover the context that has created a world where they can exist as an out, queer person. Despite a veneer of mystery, the plot is largely driven by Sully's growth rather than action or intrigue, making this a choice more suited to character-driven readers. A surprisingly light read, this is an excellent entry point for readers curious about history and open to the paranormal. —*Austin Ferraro*

★ One of the Boys.
By Victoria Zeller.

May 2025. 344p. Levine Querido, \$19.99 (9781646145027). Gr. 8–12.

When Grace Woodhouse came out as transgender, she was ready to say goodbye to her old life. She was the star kicker on the football team with D1 colleges on the horizon, a hotshot with plenty of friends and a popular girlfriend—and a nasty drinking habit to hide her inner turmoil. After forgoing summer football practice for hormones

and a summer job, Grace is ready to take on senior year with a new batch of queer friends and her head down. However, she can't ignore the call of her old football pals, who are desperate for help training a new kicker. Except, they decide they'd like Grace to come out of retirement. Grace hesitantly agrees, but the clash of old and new friends and habits are more than she bargains for. Grace's journey through senior year is portrayed with nuance, noting the struggles of transition when one doesn't "pass" and of old friends learning to accept a "new" version of herself. Grace grapples with the challenges and transphobia of rural proximity, but this experience is thoughtful and well balanced, with a variety of queer side characters realistically enduring the challenges of accepting one's identity in high school. In this story set near Buffalo, New York, debut author Zeller speaks well to her roots as a native Western New Yorker, Bills fan, and trans woman. A standout first work, setting a high bar for the blooming subgenre of queer sports fiction. —*Kelly Ferreira*

The Protégée.
By Erica Ridley.

June 2025. 336p. Delacorte, \$19.99 (9780593987669). Gr. 7–12.

In nineteenth-century France, industrialists have replaced the aristocrats as de facto rulers of the land. Amassing unprecedented wealth by severely exploiting the working class, they simultaneously create a strict social hierarchy in which the proletariat is all but forced to cater to the callous whims of the elite. Eighteen-year-old Angélique dreams of rising above this classist culture by becoming the protégée of a top modiste in Paris. Then, a barbaric, avoidable accident leaves her an orphan and the sole caretaker of her youngest sister. Vowing revenge against the cruel capitalists who tore her family apart, Angélique is determined to use her talents as a seamstress to win their favor, embedding herself in high society and positioning herself perfectly to dismantle their elitist empire—by any means necessary. Written in a lavish style befitting the haute couture-laced setting, Ridley's fashionable tale of rhapsodic retribution is a blistering critique of capitalism and its ruthless pursuit of wealth at the expense of human dignity. Macabre and delightfully twisty, Ridley's YA debut is perfect for fans of V. E. Schwab and Kate Alice Marshall. —*Ricardo Reading*

The Romance Rivalry.
By Susan Lee.

May 2025. 368p. Harper, paper, \$15.99 (9781335012876). Gr. 9–12.

Irene Park has had a hard time standing out in high school, unless it's behind a phone screen talking about romance books. With over a million followers on her Instagram

account, where she reviews romance novels, Irene is determined to make a name for herself at college and to find love, especially since she's in the running for a big sponsorship with a South Korean dating app. The only problem is that she's never been on a date—but Irene plans to use her understanding of romance tropes to find real love. Upping the stakes is a steamy competition with fellow romance-reviewer Aiden, who's also up for the sponsorship. Lee crafts a wonderfully romantic book that explores the complexities of social media and dating in college. While Irene's hopes for succeeding at Brighton College on multiple fronts fall a little shorter than she bargained for, readers will find her academic and romantic trials relatable. A fun introduction to romance tropes for older YA readers and those interested in exploring the genre. —*Eori Tokunaga*

Sanskari Sweetheart.

By Ananya Devarajan.

May 2025. 304p. Harper, \$21.99 (9781335009944). Gr. 8–12.

Raina Iyer cares most about one thing during her senior year: winning the National Bollywood Dance Circuit scholarship. Not just because she loves it but also to prove to her mother that she's talented enough to turn her passion into a stable career. Along with her reliable cocaptain boyfriend, Aditya, Raina can't lose. Until she does. Following a morning of dodging Aditya's pleas to communicate and practicing with her team, the day ends with him breaking things off and their team fumbling and losing. But what if she could redo the entire day? Devarajan's latest novel is *Groundhog Day* with a twist as Raina wakes each day to Aditya's kiss but goes to bed with a broken heart, no closer to figuring out an end to a time loop only she is privy to. Raina's shift away from obsessing about the competition to salvaging her relationship with Aditya and a teammate shows growth, but there is certainly room for more. Nonetheless, this light read is a fun exploration of paths not taken. —*Mahjabeen Syed*

Skipshock.

By Caroline O'Donoghue.

June 2025. 400p. Candlewick/Walker, \$19.99 (9781536228816). Gr. 9–12.

Margo, almost 17, has fallen out of her world and into another. Depressed after losing her father in a plane crash, she was sent to boarding school to keep her out of trouble. On the way there, she falls and meets Moon, a traveling salesman whose travel involves speeding and slowing through time itself. Time travel is hard on a body, so most salesmen barely last a decade, and Moon is coming up on that time. His first intention is to sell Margo, which might earn him enough to quit and also win a mysterious, ongoing war, but his plans are foiled when Margo runs away, trying to find some way back to her place and time. As more time and distance pass, Moon and Margo become fond

of each other, their original motives becoming shadier. O'Donoghue, best known for her *All Our Hidden Gifts* trilogy, skips into sf here and has great and intriguing ideas for magic and tech. This will hook readers fast, and they will be ready for the planned sequel. —*Stacey Comfort*

Solo.

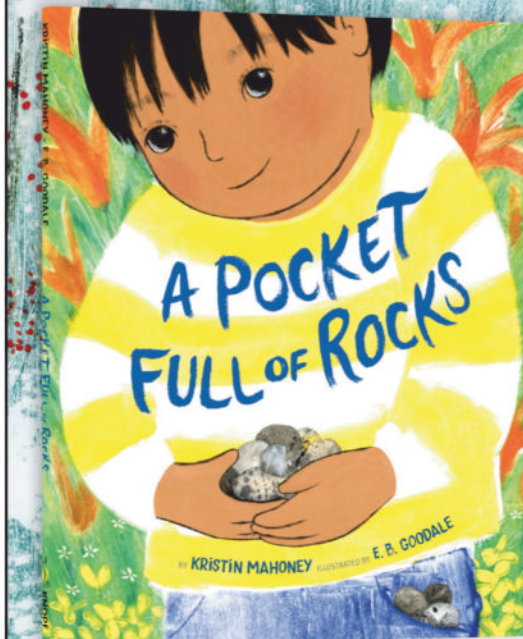
By Gráinne O'Brien.

May 2025. 280p. Little Island, paper, \$12.99 (9781915071798). Gr. 9–12.

Daisy has always excelled at playing the recorder, though her passion for playing classical music has made her feel like a bit

of an outsider. Her twin brothers have each other, her parents don't always notice her, and Daisy has one close friend, until she gets a boyfriend and things change—she starts to feel seen. When her boyfriend dumps her after the first time they have sex and her best friend drifts away, Daisy doesn't think she will ever play again. But with the help of new girl Flora, Daisy starts to heal from the hurt, until her dad's health declines and her world spins out of control. This Irish novel in verse is a testament to the power of music. Daisy feels as though she should punish herself by not playing, and her friendship with Flora helps her find her music again.

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—*Booklist*, starred review

★ “Many rich threads intersect in this seasonal meditation.”
—*Publishers Weekly*,
starred review



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The verse element pulls away from the story and leads to some underdeveloped plotlines and characters, but nevertheless, Daisy's journey to loving music again is a touching read. —*Sarah Bean Thompson*

Solo Stan.

By **Talia Tucker.**

June 2025. 224p. Penguin/Kokila, \$18.99 (9780593624784). Gr. 8–12.

Opposites attract when two boys end up alone together at a concert that's soon cut short by a power outage. Kai was devastated when he found out that his best friends were leaving early the summer after high school, and he'd bought four tickets to a concert in Raleigh for nothing. Elias is horrified when he's sent to live with his uncle for the summer in a small North Carolina town. Although the two boys initially clash when they meet as coworkers, their chance reencounter at the concert leads to a night of adventure and falling for each other in Raleigh. As they embark on a scavenger hunt across the city, they find common ground and the courage to act on their attraction to each other. Tucker's follow-up to *Rules for Rule Breaking* (2024) is a sweet and exciting queer romance. The work tackles the unreasonable expectations often placed on Black teen boys and showcases a delightful tenderness. A fun and realistic romance for fans of queer YA. —*Karis Rogerson*

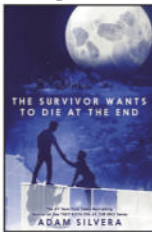


The Survivor Wants to Die at the End.

By **Adam Silvera.**

May 2025. 720p. HarperCollins/Quill Tree, \$23.99 (9780063240858). Gr. 9–12.

One week. That's how long Paz Dario and Alano Rosa have to confront their pasts, live their present, and rescue their future together. But seven days feels like an eternity for Paz, whose traumatic childhood has him hoping for a call from Death-Cast. But for Alano, the heir to the Death-Cast empire, it's just not enough time, especially since he's recovering from an assassination attempt, dealing with an unexpected betrayal, and trying to keep Paz from following through on his own self-destructive goal. His father's death overshadows Paz at every turn, haunting him and driving him to sabotage his relationships with his family—and now Alano. At the same time, the future of Death-Cast hangs in the balance, with an election on the horizon; Alano's part in the company is also in question as his father's hopes start to feel more demanding and oppressive. Paz and Alano's relationship is rendered with great care and sensitivity, but readers should still be prepared for frank discussions of self-harm and suicidal ide-



ation throughout, as well as revelations of physical and psychological abuse. A visceral, heartbreaking-yet-hopeful emotional roller coaster, *The Survivor Wants to Die at the End* delivers an unforgettable narrative that is as beautiful as it is audacious. Silvera's latest novel is a remarkable achievement that begs to be embraced and savored. —*Rob Bittner*

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HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: *They Both*

Die at the End (2017) and *The First to Die at the End* (2022) were both highly acclaimed best-sellers, so expect readers to turn out in droves for a new addition to this universe.

Top Heavy.

By **Rhonda DeChambeau.**

June 2025. 352p. Holiday, \$19.99 (9780823458134). Gr. 8–12.

Dance means everything to Esme and her best friend, Mia, who practice for hours in preparation for Elite team tryouts. Dancing is the only time Esme feels totally free, despite the constant worries about her size-double-D breasts painfully bouncing with her powerful movements. Once Esme and Mia make the team, life doesn't get any easier as the senior elite members—especially the leader, who always has a comment about Esme's skills or body—ice out the newer girls. Life is also challenging at home since Esme's dad injured his back at work, requiring an

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expensive surgery that stretches the family's already thin budget. As Esme navigates the stress of dance, romantic interests, money, and her body, she is forced to reconsider what and who makes her feel strong. Readers who have grown out of the target audience of Lisa Fipps' acclaimed *Starfish* (2021) will find a similar verse style here, while the more mature scenes of a high-school party with alcohol and unwanted groping pull the text toward older readers. Although the subject matter could come off as heavy, DeChambeau's novel is brightened by Esme's evolving self-confidence. —*Diana Ford*

The Uncertainty Principle.

By Joshua Davis and Kal Kini-Davis.

June 2025. 272p. Penguin Workshop, \$19.99 (9780593660300). Gr. 8–10.

After a shocking incident at her high school, 17-year-old Mia and her family set sail—permanently. Now, months later, Mia has mostly acclimated to life at sea, but it's desperately lonely. There's a light on the horizon, though: Mia's uncle has agreed to let her finish out high school from his home. But then Mia meets Alby, another teen living life on the waves. Introspective and swirling around a mysterious trauma that Davis (*Spare Parts*, 2014) and Kini-Davis reveal layer by layer, this work marks the authors' partnered young adult debut. With an unusual setting, the story takes advantage of the largely monotonous seascape to explore Mia's psyche and troubles. Teen readers will find familiar awkwardness as Mia navigates the Caribbean and her life, complicated by a mother with a mental health condition and a nagging uncertainty about her own identity and, ultimately, sexual orientation. Most characters read as white, while another romantic interest, Nisha, and her family read as of South Asian descent. —*Abby Hargreaves*

★ The Unexpected Consequence of Bleeding on a Tuesday.

By Kelsey B. Toney.

June 2025. 304p. Random, \$19.99 (9780593811511). Gr. 7–12.

Delia Bridges didn't intend to ruin her future by getting caught high and in possession of a weed tincture at school, but her extreme period pain left her feeling desperate. When her period shows up two days early and interferes with the opening ceremony for a prestigious pre-med mentorship during her senior year, she makes a snap decision that ends up seeing her expelled, kicked out of the mentorship, and unaccepted from her dream college. At the same time, her seventh and eighth gynecologists are gaslighting her, refusing to give her the treatment she so desperately needs. Shunted back to public school, Delia reconnects with her ex-best friend, falls for a cute boy, and works

to find the strength to stand up for herself and demand the care she deserves. Toney has crafted a compelling young-adult story that is simultaneously hilarious, enraging, and emotional. The book is well plotted with an interesting story that goes hand in hand with the important messages of empowerment and medical agency it has for teens. Delia's righteous rage at the healthcare system is more than earned. With laugh-out-loud catastrophes that are told with empathy, Toney's debut is a fast-paced romp full of heart, presenting not just an engaging story but a helpful road map for teens seeking to practice self-advocacy. —*Karis Rogerson*

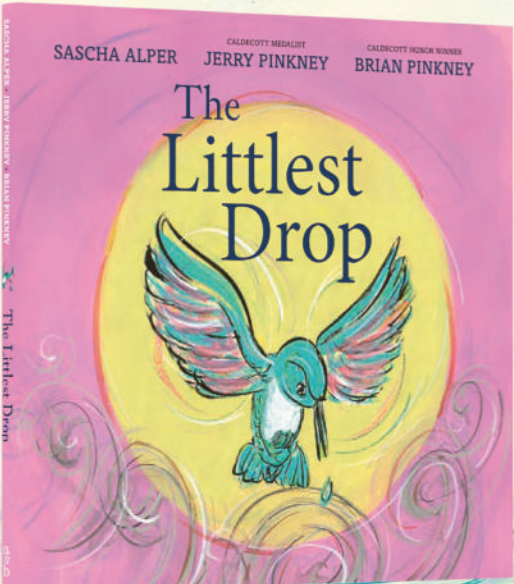
Vesuvius.

By Cass Biehn.

June 2025. 384p. Peachtree Teen, \$19.99 (9781682637326). Gr. 9–12.

Though he remembers little of it, Felix's past keeps him on the run from city to city in the ancient Roman Empire. In Pompeii, he finds a gleaming silver helmet in a temple honoring Apollo, and stealing it is almost too easy for such an experienced thief. Though Felix couldn't foresee the chain reaction that his theft would trigger, Loren, a strait-laced temple acolyte with prophetic dreams, is all too aware of the potential impacts of possessing the cursed helmet. As the boys race against the

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clock set by Loren's visions to figure out Felix's connection to the helmet and how to stop what is coming, begrudging partnership and aggravation begin to soften into something else. The reader's knowledge of the impending fate of the city lends extra urgency to Felix and Loren's quest, though there are many threads to follow and some questions are left unanswered. Secondary character interactions are engaging but too brief; Roman mythological connections are a draw for the Riordan crowd, as are the high stakes, modern-feeling characters, queer romance, and witty banter. —*Allie Stevens*

Wandering Wild.

By Lynette Noni.

May 2025. 318p. Blackstone, \$19.99 (9798874811723). Gr. 8–12.

After getting a DUI and going into rehab, Hollywood's bad boy Zander Rune must redeem his reputation (and career) by giving one lucky winner four days in the wilderness with him. Over in Australia, Charlie Hart's BFF, Amber, must bow out of the trip due to health matters, leaving a reluctant Charlie to take her place. From the get-go, it is clear that Charlie is no fan of Zander's lifestyle; though, with the help of reality survival show host Rykon Hawke, both young adults go on a cathartic journey that involves jumping out of a plane, eating a snake, and even falling in love. Award-winning author Noni's YA romance will leave readers' blood pumping. The story is told from the viewpoint of both protagonists and thoughtfully conveys each character's grief. Noni addresses topics of mental health, thoughts of suicide, and trauma in a way that allows people to understand that they do not have to bear the pain alone. An exciting read with a great message to never give up on living life. —*Beronica Garcia*

★ We Can Never Leave.

By H. E. Edgmon.

June 2025. 320p. St. Martin's/Wednesday, \$21 (9781250853653). Gr. 9–12.

Nobody really knows much about the Caravan—not the Caravan-born and certainly not the Caravan-acquired. This patchwork community of the inhuman and magically gifted travels the U.S. in a cluster of camper vans, collecting children like them along the way, but their mechanisms and motivations remain a mystery. When the entire Caravan disappears into thin air and leaves Hugo, Bird, Felix, Eamon, and Calliope behind, the five are forced to struggle through the tangled knots of their intertwined histories to find a safe place to land. And it is a struggle; as Edgmon breaks the fourth wall to assert, this is not a heartwarming story about teens learning to set aside their differences and love one another. Each character is complicated, messy, and angry in their own way, and while



the novel's resolution is satisfying, it is more haunting than happy. The astounding beauty of the prose unnervingly normalizes the often gruesome content, folding the reader seamlessly into the mindsets of the teens who are far from recognizing their own severe trauma. Overall, more mystery than action and complete with a potentially daunting six-POV, dual-time line narration, the enthralling storytelling and deeply flawed characters make this a top choice for readers up for a challenge. —*Austin Ferraro*

When Love Gives You Lemons.

By Steven Salvatore.

May 2025. 384p. Bloomsbury YA, \$20.99 (9781547615278). Gr. 8–12.

Just over a year ago, Fielder Lemon had his heart broken by Ricky DeLuca, his childhood best friend turned boyfriend of two and a half years. Now, Fielder's cousin is marrying Ricky's sister, and it's a destination wedding on the Amalfi Coast. The whole family—plus Ricky's new boyfriend, Cam—make their way to Italy on a private jet (or “PJ,” as Fielder calls it). Fielder embarks on a chaotic quest to try to win Ricky back, engaging in light sabotage along the way. Ultimately, the choice is Ricky's: Will he return to the past with Fielder or carve a new future with Cam? With a sprawling cast of quirky aunts, a hilarious nonna, and a crew of cousins who are all along for the mess, Salvatore's latest young adult romance takes readers on quite the journey. The often fourth-wall-breaking narration jumps between Fielder's and Ricky's points of view. The romance of southern Italy sets the perfect scene for Fielder and Ricky to figure themselves out. —*Karis Rogerson*

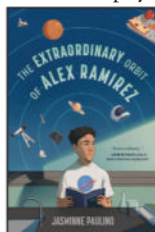
Middle Readers

★ The Extraordinary Orbit of Alex Ramirez.

By Jasmine Paulino.

June 2025. 304p. Putnam, \$18.99 (9780593859315). Gr. 5–8.

Fifth-grader Alex Ramirez is an “SC” (self-contained) student with unspecified neurodivergence, whose school places students with physical and emotional differences in their own classroom. Ever since he lost control with another student in third grade, he's been separated from the main class because he just can't make his brain and body work together. Frustrated, he keeps trying. As a young man with dreams of literally reaching the stars by working at NASA, he is driven to break through the restrictive barriers of his school and family to extend his opportunities. His immediate goal is to join Ms. Rose's regular science class and participate in the countywide science fair; after that, who knows where he'll go? Along the way he learns effective interpersonal and communication skills, with his SC cohort



sharing his ups and downs, moving forward themselves through important conversations and revelations. Written in spare, authentic verse interspersed with naturally flowing Spanish that reflects Alex's roots, Paulino's debut captures one student's aspirations and climb to success as he becomes the hero of his own story. Readers will identify with Alex and his friends' desire to be seen, heard, and challenged for who they are rather than trapped by others' stereotype-informed views of their diagnoses. Targeted to middle-schoolers, this book will appeal beyond the age range, touching hearts and consciences. A must-read. —*Beth Rosania*

Flying in Colors.

By Padma Prasad Reddeppa.

May 2025. 320p. Lee & Low/Tu, \$21.95 (9781643796758). Gr. 4–7.

This tapestry of stories follows Pavi from ages 8 to 10 in Tamil Nadu, South India, in the 1970s. From cousin squabbles to school drama to living with grief, Pavi's journey will still be relatable to many readers today. Pavi struggles with uncertainty about her father's job, wonders why so many adults shy away from her questions, and yearns for greater independence. Pavi and her intergenerational family—including her paternal grandparents, aunt, uncles, and cousin—live intertwined lives, visiting her maternal grandparents and going to her deceased uncle's grave on his birthday each year. Though the book is primarily linear, Pavi's flashbacks and memories are interspersed. The result is an almost vignette-style novel, allowing readers to leisurely experience Pavi's journey to adolescence. Heavier moments, such as the pain of grief, uncertainty, and pregnancy loss, are countered with humorous romps via Pavi's games with her friends and cousin, a mango-theft spree, and tender family scenes. Reddeppa seamlessly incorporates Tamil language and the ripple effects of colonialism into her debut. A glossary and an author's note complete the back matter. —*Christine Hartman Derr*

Giant.

By Judith McQuoid.

June 2025. 224p. Little Island, \$18.99 (9781915071637). Gr. 4–6.

This unusual historical novel is based on two real-life boys who grew up near the shipyards in Belfast, Northern Ireland, during the early twentieth century. Twelve-year-old Davy, based on the author's grandfather, is a working-class lad whose family has been living in dire poverty since Davy's father injured his back and lost his shipyard job. Leaving school to help support his family, Davy plans to get a job at the shipyard too. However, he first becomes a paid companion for 9-year-old Jacks, whose mother is very ill. Jacks introduces Davy to the world of books and the boys bond over their love of stories. Later, whenever Jacks is in distress, he turns to Davy. Meanwhile, Jacks helps Davy gain confidence in himself and his artistic ability.

In portraying the two households and their fundamental differences, McQuoid shows the inequalities and consequences of the era's class system, but young readers, particularly fans of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, may be more intrigued by the fact that Jacks is a character based on a young C. S. Lewis. A well-researched, imaginative, and satisfying narrative. —*Carolyn Phelan*

★ **Graciela in the Abyss.**
By Meg Medina. Illus. by Anna Balbusso and Elena Balbusso.

July 2025. 256p. Candlewick, \$18.99 (9781536219456). Gr. 5–9.

Graciela Lima was 12 years old when a gust of wind knocked her into the sea, where she sank and slept for 100 years before awakening as a sea spirit. Under the tutelage of a Spirit Guide, Graciela begins to learn the ways of the deep and takes on work as a glazier, grinding broken bottles into beautiful sea glass. On land, in a nearby fishing village, the blacksmith's son secretly works metal into delicate, whimsical creations. While Jorge Leon's artistic endeavors suit his gentle disposition, his cruel father and mother don't approve. Indeed, Jorge is searching the brush for his latest project, which had been thrown out the window by his mother, when he uncovers an old harpoon. Instinctively, he knows this must be the cursed weapon forged by his great-grandfather and once used to kill a sea spirit. Jorge's attempt to dispose of the harpoon in the harbor coincides with the awakening of the very same drowned souls who killed the sea spirit all those years ago. This full-circle moment binds Graciela and Jorge together in a mission to save the underwater realm. Medina effortlessly builds a magical marine world that feels fished from folklore, and the manner in which each story in the narrative informs the others is beautifully crafted. Rich in compelling characters, complicated emotions, and originality, this epic writ small will dazzle its readers. —*Julia Smith*

★ **Growing Home.**
By Beth Ferry. Illus. by Terry Fan and Eric Fan.

May 2025. 272p. Simon & Schuster, \$17.99 (9781665942485). Gr. 1–4.

Toasty the goldfish lives a luxurious life, but he's still jealous of a nearby houseplant, Ivy. He can't understand why their child, Jillian Tupper, would prefer the unexciting potted plant to his swishy self, but Toasty and Ivy have formed a somewhat begrudging bond (it helps that Ivy is magically able to pilfer cheese puffs for Toasty). The delicate détente is upset when Jillian brings home a second houseplant, and the appearance of a chirpy spider with a broken leg does nothing to diffuse the tension. When a mysterious man threatens the Tupper residence, the dis-

parate roommates pull together to protect the homestead and discover they might make the perfect team. The utterly charming tale is populated by memorable, messy characters, and it's a pleasure to watch them grow from jealous roommates to dear friends as they each gain wisdom and empathy. Touches of magic and a droll narrative style add enjoyment, and the occasional black-and-white illustrations are adorable accompaniments. A splendidly silly story that will have readers looking at friendship (and houseplants) in a new way. —*Emily Graham*

★ **The Impossible Trials of Benjaminiah Creek.**

By Jordan Lees. Illus. by Vivienne To.
June 2025. 400p. Simon & Schuster, \$19.99 (9781665950169). Gr. 3–6.

Ever since Benjaminiah Creek returned home from his adventures in *The Labyrinth of Lost and Found* (2024), he has longed to be back in Wreathenwold, where magic is part of everyday life and where his best friend, Elizabetha, lives. The opportunity unexpectedly presents itself when he finds a fragment of a stone mask among his mother's things that he knows must be from Wreathenwold. When Benjaminiah holds it to his face, it affixes itself around his eye and reveals a trail of luminescent, violet moths leading to the world he loves. Reunited with Elizabetha, he learns that the mask is made of witchstone and tied to Agatha Drake, the Witch of Midsommer. According to an old folktale, the only way to be free of the mask and the cursed fate it brings is for the wearer to complete a series of tasks set by the Witch before Midsommer draws to a close. Benjaminiah and Elizabetha set off to beat Agatha Drake's game, acquiring two more companions along the way: Silas, a mapmaker; and Mia, a snatchling. Lees layers and intersects multiple plotlines in this second Whisperwicks novel to richly develop Wreathenwold and the story's primary characters. The themes of home and belonging are central to the narrative, which continues to build toward a reckoning with Wreathenwold's corrupt elite in a future installment. —*Julia Smith*

★ **Junius Leak and the Spiraling Vortex of Doom.**

By Allan Wolf.
July 2025. 528p. Candlewick, \$18.99 (9781536217452). Gr. 4–6.

Based on an actual 1980 event, Wolf's latest weaves a dazzling tale out of environmental themes, historical backstories in a Louisiana community, buried pirate treasure, and a neurodivergent 12-year-old's vertiginously life-changing stay with a loving but unfamiliar relative. Junius arrives aboard his uncle Spot's houseboat on the shores of Lake Peigneur with a handle—mostly—on his emotional meltdowns but not his fear of be-

ing on water. Over the next dozen days, he works on both while meeting a colorfully engaging cast of local residents, experiencing the pleasures of their weekly fais-dodo, learning shocking facts about his family that his reticent mother never shared, and forming new friendships—notably, with teen eco-activist Victoria, who is protesting the oil well being drilled in the lake. Junius shares narrative duties with the lake itself, which, as a tongue-in-cheek alternate (“I am a lake, so let me be clear”) slips in historical flashbacks, including a surreptitious 1820 visit by pirate Jean Lafitte; and which, at what becomes a breathlessly suspenseful climax, describes how the oil drillers hit a tunnel in a huge nineteenth-century salt mine—and turned the whole lake into a colossal drain, then a sinkhole that led to a massive flood. Considering the vividly depicted events, the strong cast, and the young protagonist's personal triumphs, there's wow-worthy content aplenty here. —*John Peters*

★ **Losing the Plot.**
By Annaleise Byrd.

May 2025. 144p. Walker Australia, \$17.99 (9781761600388). Gr. 3–6.

Two boys with little in common are thrust into a sort of study partnership when they pick up a copy of the classic Grimm's fairy tales. They spend some time reading the story of Hansel and Gretel, until quite by accident, one of the boys transports them straight into the story. What they learn when they arrive is even darker than the stories themselves: the fairy-tale characters live their lives by acting out their stories over and over, lest they risk some awful consequence. Of course, the boys land in a crisis: Hansel is missing. Rather than simply retelling a well-known story, Byrd chooses to have characters become part of the story in a fresh new way. Not only do the boys have to bring the story back to rights, they have to maintain it in the meantime—right down to the witch's fiery end. Exciting, clever, and dynamic, this stands out from other retellings by asking, What happens to the fairy-tale characters after you've closed the book? —*Kristina Pino*

★ **Return to Sender.**
By Vera Brosgol. Illus. by the author.

May 2025. 320p. Roaring Brook, \$18.99 (9781250292186). Gr. 4–8.

When they move into his late great-aunt's apartment in Brooklyn, Oliver's mom promises this will be the last time. The last new school, the last time he'll be the new kid, the last move before they can finally settle following his father's unexpected passing. There's something different about this place, though—and it's not just the lack of cockroaches or the taxidermied animals lining the walls. Tucked away is a magical mailbox that makes wishes come true. Included among his wishes are ways to fit in at

his new, posh school, like cool shoes, winning a fight, and even an invisible jet plane. Like Brosbol's previous works, this whimsical story features a marvelous twist and her delightful illustrations throughout. Within its pages is a tender story about a small family doing their best to provide for each other and fit in, honor a father's legacy, and learn to be careful what you wish for. It's perfect for fans of magic realism and would make a great family read. —*Sam Ponke*

★ **Severe and Unusual Weather.**
By **Jessie Ann Foley.**

May 2025. 272p. HarperCollins/Quill Tree, \$19.99 (9780063207783). Gr. 4–7.

Leaving no doubt about which characters to cheer and which to boo, Foley pairs two sixth-graders with very different temperaments but much common ground against a small-town big shot with an ugly secret. Hardly has tough Nadine arrived to stay with her grandma (while her mom goes through rehab back in Chicago) than she's paired up with meek, much-bullied classmate Francis for a special local-history project. They decide to do it on the strange and infamous tornado that hit without warning a dozen years ago, killing Francis' mom and several other residents and leaving him an infant



survivor. This does not sit well with blustering Mayor Trevor Ray, who ruthlessly pressures them to pick another topic—for good reason, it turns out, as the young researchers soon uncover hints that the devastating storm might not have been entirely natural in origin. Notwithstanding Nadine's typically hard-nosed claim that no grown-ups have ever done her any favors, the author allows several members of the strong adult supporting cast to brave Ray's wrath with under-the-radar support—most winningly, town librarian Katie-Kate, an ex-marine with PTSD—on the way to a triumphant, thoroughly satisfying denouement, complete with heroic rescues, tearful reunions, and just deserts all round. A breezy, feel-good tale with whiffs of fantasy and wish fulfillment. —*John Peters*

Weird Sad and Silent.

By **Alison McGhee.**

May 2025. 192p. Penguin/Rocky Pond, \$17.99 (9780593859674). Gr. 4–7.

Daisy Jackson “invisibilizes” herself to stay safe from bullies, a skill she developed when she and her mom lived in a dangerous situation. At the same time, she “faturizes” her relationship with a stray cat by naming him Rumble Paws, giving him a backstory as rough as her own and offering him cans of tuna. New student Austin notices her even when she's invisibilizing, and they become friends. This friendship invites change, such

as Daisy acknowledging her strength from the past and allowing it to carry into her future. While domestic violence and bullying are present, they are countered with a combination of coping mechanisms and the power of community. Daisy uses counting as a coping skill, while Austin relies on art. Their community includes a trusted librarian, a beloved custodian, and a considerate neighbor—a group Daisy learns truly sees her, too. Well-developed characters in a believable world and short chapters make for accessible, enjoyable reading, balancing harder elements of the story with the beauty of community. A hopeful, heartening story. —*Christine Hartman Derr*

Written in the Stars.

By **Lee Heart.**

May 2025. 160p. Simon & Schuster/Simon Spotlight, \$17.99 (9781665971379). Gr. 4–8.

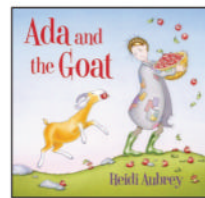
Quinn has been going to Camp Whispering Woods for years. The girls' cabins are separated from the boys', and that's just fine with her. Only this year, she spots a boy with a delightful British accent whom she cannot ignore. Does she want Harry to be her boyfriend? And, if so, is one of her bunkmates trying to steal him away before she even has the chance? Throughout the six weeks of summer camp, Quinn's friends, old and new, support her as she tries to navigate her first summer since her dad passed away. The simple plot contains little conflict and will appeal to middle-graders who may themselves be contemplating their very first crushes. An easy read for early middle-schoolers with plenty of appeal for reluctant readers, this can be handed with confidence to fans of *Shug* (2006), by Jenny Han, and *Sleepaway Girls* (2009), by Jen Calonita. This short, stand-alone romance is part of the new Spotlight Sprinkles series dedicated to tween rom-coms; series title *Meet Me at Sunset*, also by Heart, publishes simultaneously. —*Joel Shoemaker*

Young

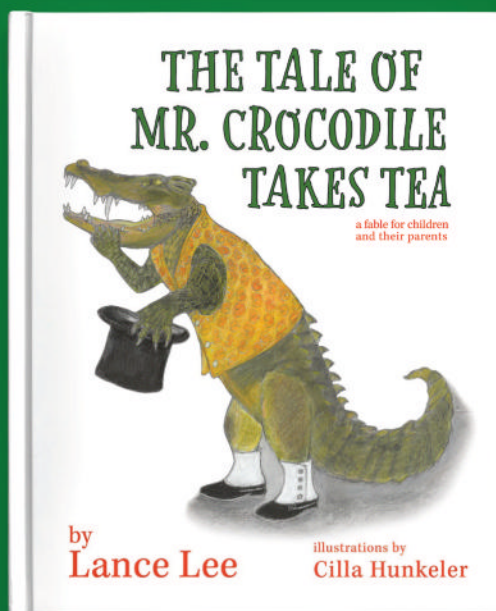
★ **Ada and the Goat.**
By **Heidi Aubrey. Illus. by the author.**

Aug. 2025. 40p. Holiday/Neal Porter, \$18.99 (9780823450800). PreS–Gr. 3.

Ada, an accomplished young woman, dreams of living alone in a house in the country, where she will grow beautiful red apples and wear a soft, gray coat to keep warm. She works hard, repairing her home and making improvements, but she enjoys her simple, orderly life. When a goat gets caught in her wire fence, she helps to free it and heal its wounds. But the goat becomes a nuisance, eating Ada's apples, chewing on her warm, gray coat, and even climbing onto the roof of her home. Ada



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—*Meilo So, illustrator, The Tale Of Brian And The House Painter Mervyn (Bronze Medalist)*

Continued on p.96



Focus on Board Books



Art by Gareth Lucas, from *Birds around the World*, by Chloe Goodhart.

All Gone!

By Nosy Crow. Illus. by Carolina Búzio.

June 2025, 24p. Nosy Crow, \$9.99 (9798887771656). PreS.

Written in consultation with a speech and language therapist, books in the Toddler Talk series are designed to encourage young children who have learned words to begin using and interpreting them in common phrases. In this book, the communication between adults and young children takes place in four families' kitchens and dining areas, where adults and older children sit with a toddler in a high chair. Phrases in the text vary from a simple "Wash hands" before the meal to the more complex "Uh-oh. Dirty floor" following a spill. This attractive board book is both useful and appealing. —*Carolyn Phelan*

Birds around the World: An Opposites Book.

By Chloe Goodhart. Illus. by Gareth Lucas.

2025, 20p. Penguin Workshop, \$9.99 (9780593752005). PreS–Gr. 1. 598.

This entry in the Birding for Babies series offers an entertaining introduction to an impressive array of birds and the concept of opposites. Some species and contrasts are familiar (an ostrich is big, a bee hummingbird is small), and some less so (a bearded vulture is up, high in the air, while a kiwi is down, tramping around the forest). Even grown-ups may learn a new bird or two; the desert-dwelling verdin and olive-backed sunbird are particularly unusual. Beautiful birds are presented on geometric backgrounds, and playful rhymes are accompanied by fact boxes imparting additional tidbits. A simple and stylish introduction. —*Emily Graham*

Eggs, Please!

By Cheryl Yau Chepusova. Illus. by Rebecca Hollingsworth.

2025, 28p. The Collective Book Studio, \$12.95 (9781685551155). PreS. 641.675.

This ovoid-shaped board book serves up a survey of gustatory delights, going on an alphabetical international tour of all things eggs that ventures far beyond the familiar fried or scrambled. Chepusova offers short, deliciously evocative descriptions of egg dishes prepared across cultures, while accomplished illustrator Hollingsworth, using richly colored, crisp shapes and embellishments in bold patterns, sets out each inviting preparation with simple, clear detail. Stylized overhead views of plated dishes, each labeled with its place of origin, highlight the tantalizing, inventive concoctions. A QR code leads to a pronunciation guide. An enticing introduction to the myriad ways to experience the world, one egg at a time. —*Rebecca Thornburgh*

First Joys.

By Véronique Joffre. Illus. by the author.

2025, 36p. Penguin Workshop/RISE, \$12.99 (9780593889350). PreS.

With spare text and colorful illustrations, this sweet board book, translated from French, portrays both animal and human versions of several "first joys of life" for babies and their family members. The appealing illustrations have a slightly vintage feel and tenderly portray the close family relationships. Each spread either contrasts or builds on a milestone of early life with one human and one animal illustration. For example, "appearing" features a swan cygnet hatching, while "hiding" shows a human infant playing hide-and-seek. Parents and other family members will enjoy reading about these special firsts with their own little ones. —*Miriam Aronin*

Hank Goes Peck.

By Maudie Powell-Tuck. Illus. by Duncan Beedie.

2025, 20p. Tiger Tales, \$9.99 (9781664351547). PreS–K.

In this follow-up to *Hank Goes Honk* (2024), Hank has a "pesky" habit of pecking just about everything, from a trampoline to an inflatable raft to a knitted scarf. A time-out and even an uncomfortable encounter with a bull fail to tame Hank's pecking. Cleverly placed holes throughout the book, some round and others ragged, represent Hank's pecks (and are integrated into the illustrations on the backs of the pages as well). Hank's dour expression and silly hat belie his mischievous actions. Although Hank may not be a favorite with adults, preschoolers will likely find Beedie's illustrations of Hank's naughty pecking and its madcap consequences hilarious. —*Miriam Aronin*

My Mother, Mi Madre.

By Raúl the Third. Illus. by the author.

2025, 20p. HarperCollins/Versify, \$9.99 (9780063396265). PreS.

Raúl the Third provides a sweet homage to several generations of mothers and their children in this love letter to parents who devote care and quality time to their young ones. Readers join Coco Rocho, an adorable young insect, as he and his mother journey from the womb to playing and exploring the world together, ending with a visit to his abuela at Rocho Ranch. As Coco Rocho and his mother—in all of her traditionally patterned clothing and gold jewelry—traverse the desert together on their burros, he fondly recalls all the times he learned or grew under her guidance. With a gorgeous color palette reflecting earthy desert hues and warm character profiles that make even the most repugnant insect a lovable, relatable character, this bilingual book makes a perfect parent-child read-aloud. —*Stephanie Cohen*

Tons of Love.

By Bill Cotter. Illus. by the author.

2025, 24p. Sourcebooks/Jabberwocky, \$8.99 (9781728277158). PreS.

Larry, a friendly purple monster, greets children as they open the latest book in Cotter's popular Don't Push the Button series. After warning kids *not to push* the big, round, red button beside him, Larry relents and encourages them to give it "just one little push." A turn of the page shows the result: a heart-shaped red button. Another push, and Larry turns pink! Chaos reigns, with heart-shaped balloons floating everywhere, waiting for children to pop them with a touch. From the large-scale illustrations to the clever text, this appealing board book is sure to entertain toddlers while encouraging imaginative play. —*Carolyn Phelan*

Whose Eyes?

By Kristina Jones. Illus. by the author.

2025, 20p. Amicus Ink, \$9.99 (9798889880004). PreS. 591.7.

Perfect for newborns with its bold black-and-white illustrations, this whimsical board book provides an engaging first look at animals. The multimedia art has a textured pattern that may not be discernible to newborns but will be interesting for older babies and toddlers. A fun game of peekaboo with common animals, such as a chickadee, mouse, bunny, and frog, provides a way to learn vocabulary through play. An electric blue color highlights the word *eyes* throughout the text and provides the eye color for the animals, thus linking the word to the object. Rhymes and repetition throughout the book will also help with language acquisition. —*Ana Menchaca*

tells the goat to leave, but soon she misses her troublemaking companion, who returns with a surprise for Ada, readers, and children listening to her story. In the end, Ada's life is neither as simple nor as orderly as she had expected, but she is content. Curving lines define the hilly land where Ada lives as well as the pleasing drawings, created with graphite and watercolors, of Ada, her friendly goat, her apple trees, and her home. The narrative is well-suited to reading aloud, and children will be pleased to discover that the illustrations alone reveal the most unexpected

twist in the story. A charming picture book.
—Carolyn Phelan

The Arguers.

By Corinna Luyken. Illus. by the author.

May 2025. 40p. Penguin/Rocky Pond, \$18.99

(9781984814425). PreS–Gr. 2.

In this peculiar picture-book *hairy* tale, we find a gloriously rendered kingdom chock-full of arguing grown-ups. Every citizen, always with a magnificently flowing hairstyle, is arguing on every page—over how to untangle the king's seemingly endless beard, how to feed noodles to the queen's hounds, and any other scenario that arises, no matter how ab-

surd. After the king and queen announce a contest to determine the best arguer, the people are too busy arguing to even notice that the competition has begun. They carry on—until a lightning strike sets the king's rolling beard ablaze, and they must agree on the best way to save the situation. There's an otherworldly delight to the strange world Luyken has crafted, made wondrous by the vivid, fine-lined illustrations depicting countless arguers in a wonderful sort of Victorian-circus fashion, all topped with long, extravagantly styled hairdos. This is art that can be pored over time and time again, and young readers will jump at the chance to argue themselves, prompted or not. Strangely beautiful. —Ronny Khuri

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At the Window.

By Hope Lim. Illus. by Qin Leng.

May 2025. 40p. Candlewick, \$18.99 (9781536224788).

K–Gr. 2.

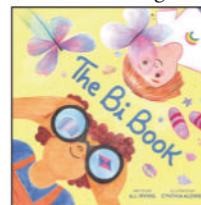
Walking a dog through the neighborhood, a child often sees a woman through her open window. At the child's home, the windows are covered by curtains, and the child is intrigued that the woman keeps her window unobstructed. Over time, they exchange greetings, and the narrator learns that the woman is a writer. While the words of the text are spare, the ink-and-watercolor illustrations demonstrate the child's changing perspective. One day the woman is gone, and soon the house is for sale. During an open house, the child visits the home and appreciates having the chance to experience the neighborhood the way their neighbor did. Subtly building on the idea that children initially see only their own points of view before developing empathy and understanding of others, the narrator grows in the ability to take a wider view and even make a new friend through sharing the neighbor's perspective. This book would be useful to encourage children to look at their own surroundings in new ways and consider what they may be missing.
—Lucinda Whitehurst

★ The Bi Book.

By A. J. Irving. Illus. by Cynthia Alonso.

May 2025. 32p. Knopf, \$18.99 (9780593571828). PreS–Gr. 2.

This gorgeous concept book begins, directly, with a lesson on the prefix *bi-*, which typically means “two.” The ensuing series of full-bleed spreads introduce several common uses: biennial plant, bicycle, biped, bilateral symmetry, bivalve, binoculars, bilingual, biracial. Each spread presents an outdoor scene—kite flying, gardening, whale watching—with a recurring, rainbow shirt-clad kid and a sentence that effectively provides gentle context to the given term (in addition to a back-matter glossary defining each one). A final turn declares that “one word that starts with ‘bi’ can mean ‘more than two,’” presenting the term *bisexual*.



ality, “because bi hearts love in a rainbow of ways.” Of course, this development has been thoroughly seeded throughout the book, in illustrations frequently shaded in pinks, purples, and blues, featuring families that appear to include same-sex couples, in addition to the central character’s rainbow shirt. Alonso’s pastel, crayon, and colored-pencil artwork brings an undeniable exuberance to the proceedings, setting it all on a softly etched, brightly colored beach setting populated by smiling people. It’s a simple approach that bridges an understanding of language to an expression of identity, infusing it all with an appropriate sense of peace, pride, and community. A sweet, loving lesson in language and love, on a subject rarely covered. —Ronny Khuri

★ Big Family Beach Day.
By Nina Crews. Illus. by the author.

May 2025, 32p. Greenwillow, \$19.99 (9780063390225). PreS–Gr. 3.

Every summer, Maya, her mother, and her grandmother drive to the beach, where they join her aunts, uncles, and cousins. Last year, Maya’s oldest cousin chose what to do first,



but this year Maya and cousin Leo will decide: Sand or sea? Pails or snorkels? After applying sunscreen and listening to their mothers’ safety lectures, the kids choose the ocean

and run toward it, *full tilt!* But as soon as a frigid wave hits their ankles, they turn and dash back. Soon they’re digging in the sand with their uncles and younger cousins, while Mom takes pictures. Sandwiches, naps, and shared activities fill their memorable day together. And riding home, Maya recalls her family’s happy beach day, perhaps “the best day ever.” It’s notable that Maya’s contentment is not marred by the fact that she and Leo had been scolded for inadvertently splashing water on their younger cousins, who reacted with tears. Soon, all was well again. The digitally drawn illustrations portray a biracial extended family enjoying their beloved summer beach day. Their emotions are evident in the art, while Maya’s narrative focuses on her experiences. Anyone who remembers family outings at the beach will delight in seeing this picture book celebrate such similar, timeless activities. —Carolyn Phelan

Bright Lights and Summer Nights.
By Shauntay Grant. Illus. by Zach Manbeck.

May 2025, 40p. Tundra, \$18.99 (9781774883662). PreS.

Imagine an aurora’s luminous greens layered upon a deep blue sky dusted with gold and pink. This is the nighttime playground that awaits a small tot, apple-cheeked and clad in a star-patterned onesie, whom the majestic Moon Mother carries to join other wakeful children. The simple text is soothing in its pattern of repetition as the children embark on an enchanted night at a county

fair. There, they eat caramel apples and ride the carousel—aglow in yellow light—before following a road to board a trolley. Their next stop leads them to “Dreamy dark and fireflies / Fireflies and mystic moon / Mystic moon and brilliant night.” An impressive fireworks display in blue, green, and gold gives way to the child sleeping soundly on a billowy cloud under the watchful gaze of Mother Moon. The soft, rounded artwork matches the story’s dreamy atmosphere, making this whimsical tale a lovely addition to the tradition of bedtime books that imagine a world of excitement and impossible wonders once the sun goes down. —Julia Smith

A Century for Caroline.

By Kaija Langley. Illus. by TeMika Grooms.

May 2025, 32p. Simon & Schuster/Denene Millner, \$19.99 (9781665934725). Gr. 1–3.

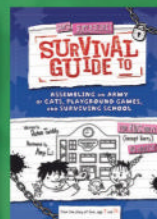
Jasmine and her grandfather embark on a road trip to attend her great-grandmother Caroline’s 100th birthday party. On the way, Jasmine contemplates the long life her great-grandmother has lived, “I wonder how she got to be one hundred years old?” The multimedia illustrations are soft but realistic and show a happy Black family with a range of skin tones. Whimsical details, such as Great-Grandmother Caroline wearing a tiara and the many smiling faces add

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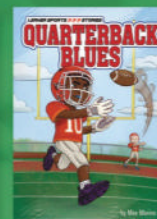
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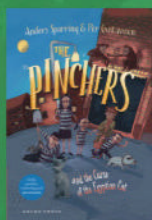
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warmth to the story. Great-Grandmother Caroline spends time one-on-one with her precious great-granddaughter, during which she answers the young girl's question about life and longevity: "Getting old also takes faith . . . you keep showing up, keep trying, keep making the most of the surprises life gives you . . . day by day." A beautiful cake with 100 candles illuminates the faces of the extended family before being blown out by Caroline and Jasmine, the oldest and youngest present. A sweet celebration of family and the joys of living a long life, as seen through the eyes of a perceptive child. —*Ana Menchaca*

Cranky, Crabby Crow (Saves the World).
By Corey R. Tabor. Illus. by the author.

May 2025. 40p. Greenwillow, \$19.99 (9780063373587). K-Gr. 2.

Colored by Tabor's characteristic flair for humor and surprise, cranky, crabby Crow turns out to be a secret agent tasked with saving the world! Initially, the crow doesn't seem special. Squirrel, Hummingbird, Bat, Rat, and Cat try to get him to do fun things with them, but Crow isn't interested. To them, he's just sitting on a wire, being unwelcoming. The narrative takes a turn when a nearby service phone rings. Crow has been on a mission, and the first objective was to clear the area. Jumping inside a secret phone-pole elevator takes the crow to a hideout that includes a rocket ship. Agent Crow has to intercept an asteroid heading for Earth. Hitting it with missiles and lasers breaks it into small, harmless pieces. The animals interact on an uncluttered background, which keeps the action of the story tightly focused. The sudden twist from simple animal communications to agent duties is a fun surprise that children will love. In a further challenge to expectations, Crow then invites the other animals over to view a beautiful meteor shower. —*Lucinda Whitehurst*

Crocodiles Need Friends, Too!
By Tom Toro. Illus. by the author.

May 2025. 40p. Little, Brown, \$18.99 (9780316471879). PreS-Gr. 1.

It's difficult for Croc to make friends when the other animals are afraid of her huge mouth and sharp teeth. The energetic reptile attempts to coax the other critters into being friendly by surprising them with knitted gifts. She carries her "I [Heart] Knitting" tote bag around with her, but her underwater cave is filled with creations that have been rejected by other animals who are wary of her. Croc's mother, father, and grandfather don't think young Croc should be concerned about making friends (her mother believes they're simply food!), but she feels differently and is sad that she's unable to share her fun side and many talents with the other savanna animals. It takes a while, but she slowly builds trust among the creatures (with the help of her bird sidekick), and a new, friendlier community is

established. Humorous illustrations include Croc's mother teaching "crocerise" classes to music and her father sitting in a bathtub filled with mud. Very young readers will be pleased with Croc's new group of friends. —*Maryann Owen*

Dad, Is It Time to Gather Mint? Celebrating the Seasons.

By Tyna Legault Taylor. Illus. by Michelle Dao.

May 2025. 36p. HighWater, \$18.95 (9781774921227). PreS-Gr. 2.

A young Cree and Anishinaabe boy learns about plants, animals, and traditional food-harvesting practices. Joshua explores the land with his father and eagerly awaits the arrival of summer, during which he loves to pick fresh mint that grows along the shore, which his mother uses to make tea. Throughout the seasons, the child notices changes in nature and participates in familial outdoor activities, including hunting for partridge in fall, collecting cedar-tree branches to purify the indoor air in winter, and fishing for rainbow trout in spring. Joshua repeatedly asks, "Dad, is it time to gather katakipanik / gaaminomaagobagak from the aski / aki?" Swampy Cree words (highlighted in brown) and Anishinaabemowin words (highlighted in green) are interwoven seamlessly into the simply stated sentences, with English translations appearing on the side. Dao's vibrant illustrations radiate warmth and connection. Back matter offers a glossary and a recipe for "Mint from the Land Iced Tea." Sharing land-based Indigenous knowledge, this is an informative picture-book-series opener. —*Linda Ludke*

Dawn: Watch the World Awaken.
By Marc Martin. Illus. by the author.

July 2025. 48p. Candlewick Studio, \$18.99 (9781536232400). PreS-K.

Enchanting, digitally enhanced watercolors recreate the diffused light of an early morning on a lake and depict the quiet busyness of flora and fauna at this time of day. Nearly full-page panels, with occasional paired and even triptych illustrations, are framed by white space with spare, one-word descriptions, beginning with the titular "Dawn." The picture book is more of an experience than a traditional story, using several techniques to help young readers make connections. With the alliterative "sound" and "spring," for example, a deer freezes when it hears a noise and then leaps away from potential threat, while opposites, like "hide" with a small lizard and "emerge" with a cicada, show varying animal behaviors. Several short series also create storylike elements, such as a lively interaction between a fly and the fish that wants to (and successfully does) eat it. The deceptive simplicity allows children to fill in the gaps by coming up with their own story. A "glint" and "glimmer" of the sun and eventual concluding sunrise cue the day and end of this lovely book. —*Angela Leeper*

Dream for the Land.

By Laekan Zea Kemp. Illus. by Leo Espinosa.

May 2025. 40p. Random/Anne Schwartz, \$18.99 (9780593710302). K-Gr. 3.

A little girl and her parents live on a small farm in the dry Southwest, and they're struggling through drought. As they survey their withering crops with worried faces, the girl reflects on how the land has changed since Pá's ancestors lived there; where there used to be a river is now a dry bed. Kemp's poignant story about the devastating impact of climate change on agriculture is a sharp rebuke of the industrial origins of the climate crisis. Their circumstances are not due to just a lack of rain: "I would wish to change the hearts of the men who ran the rivers dry," Pá says. Espinosa's affecting artwork makes powerful use of a predominantly sandy-brown palette, which stands in sharp contrast to the lush blues and greens in the one moment of flashback. An author's note provides important context on how industrial agriculture and fossil fuel mining have contributed directly to the megadrought currently afflicting the Southwest. An illuminating, galvanizing choice, particularly for agricultural areas disrupted by climate change. —*Sarah Hunter*

Elvis & Romeo.

By David Soman and Jacky Davis. Illus. by David Soman.

May 2025. 40p. Aladdin, \$19.99 (9781665948067). PreS-Gr. 2.

Elvis, a pudgy bulldog, and Romeo, a mutt of mixed heritage, are each visiting the dog park for the first time. Elvis is reluctant to take part in the new venture, while Romeo is enthusiastically looking forward to making a friend. Upon entering the park, they are met by a large group of various breeds, and Romeo begins his search for a buddy. He, of course, zeroes in on grumpy Elvis, though it's clear from the start that the two don't enjoy the same things. Romeo eagerly attempts to engage Elvis in play, but the disgruntled bulldog will not participate. By way of a misguided Frisbee, the dogs discover they do have something in common that is near and dear to their hearts (and stomachs), and the rest is history. Much of the story is delivered through color-coded speech bubbles that indicate which dog is communicating. The multicultural group of pet owners and wide variety of dogs fill the park with color and movement in the charming, digitally created artwork, which is a joy to peruse. —*Maryann Owen*

A Festa for Luana.

By Joana Pastro. Illus. by Duda Oliva.

May 2025. 40p. Atheneum, \$19.99 (9781665924795). K-Gr. 3.

In this charming celebration of family and culture, Luana has been looking forward to visiting her grandparents in Brazil and reconnecting with the people and places she loves. Although she is bilingual and bicultural, she feels out of place when people point out her American accent. The family is preparing

for Festa Junina, the monthlong celebration that involves dancing, cooking, and special clothes. Luana only has her Fourth of July dress, which is not quite right—a flaw she soon remedies with a little creativity and imagination, showcasing both her American and Brazilian heritages. The illustrations shimmer with saturated colors, rendering the people and festivities in vibrant detail as Luana throws herself into preparations, helping the adults set up games and start the bonfire, and dancing to the music of the quadrilha. Pastro depicts a confident protagonist who is vulnerable to feeling different but bold enough to reclaim it as an asset. Back matter adds the author's personal touch, and a recipe for bolo de fubá invites everyone to celebrate Festa Junina. —*Amina Chaudhri*

 Fireworks.
By Matthew Burgess. Illus. by Cátia Chien.

May 2025. 44p. Clarion, \$19.99 (9780063216723). PreS–Gr. 2.

Burgess and Chien palpably capture the sensations of a city's hot summer day in this buoyant picture book. Two children begin



their day over breakfast before heading out into the heat for errands that take them past a spraying fire hydrant, a jazzy saxophonist in the park, and dancy beats spilling out of car windows. After a pause

for drippy, sweet watermelon, they head to the roof of their building for a brilliant fireworks display, which Chien renders thrillingly with sharp, bright pops of color on one spread and a glowing, page-filling shower of sparks on another. Burgess's tight poetic lines poignantly evoke the children's experiences ("bubble cheeks blowing brassy blasts"; "the sharp charcoal sniff / of a thousand matches extinguished"), while bouncy onomatopoeia jostles across Chien's playful multimedia artwork. It's a joyful celebration of simply being alive and experiencing the world in the guileless way children do, moving from feeling to feeling and appreciating whatever comes next. The final spreads, after the children prepare for bed, artfully tie the boom of the fireworks to the thump of a heartbeat, closing on their silhouettes, now full of sizzling specks of bright color. An electric, affectionate, and enchanting ode to delicious summer delights.

—*Sarah Hunter*

Fridays Are for Churros.
By Jenny Alvarado. Illus. by the author.

May 2025. 40p. Holiday, \$18.99 (9780823458332). PreS–Gr. 2.

In this heartwarming tale of family, tradition, and the power of community, Emi, a young girl who has just moved to a big city with her busy dad, finds herself missing their Friday churro-making tradition. With no family nearby and her dad always working,

she fears the tradition may be lost. But when she smells something sweet coming from her neighbor Señora Luisa's apartment, Emi decides to take action. Through a charming series of events, Emi enlists the help of her neighbors to gather ingredients and tools, recreating the cherished tradition in her new home. The story beautifully highlights how food can bring people together, turn neighbors into friends, and keep memories alive, even in unfamiliar places. With delightful illustrations and a warm, inviting tone, *Fridays Are for Churros* is a joyful celebration of resilience, kindness, and the bonds that form when people share what they have. A wonderful reminder that no matter where you are, family and community can always find a way to come together. —*Alana Jara*

George & Lenny Are Always Together.
By Jon Agee. Illus. by the author.

May 2025. 40p. Penguin/Rocky Pond, \$18.99 (9780593857731). PreS–Gr. 1.

George, a large, brown bear, and Lenny, a small, gray rabbit, are always together. As they play together on the playground, the two begin to discuss what it could be like to find themselves alone. George thinks it sounds lonely, but Lenny wonders whether it could be fun. Lenny decides to try it, so George, feeling spurned, says he's going to try it too, much to Lenny's disbelief. When Lenny finally gets a private spot to himself, he enjoys all kinds of solo activities but still finds himself thinking of George. Fortunately, the bear isn't far, and the pair decides that the best way to be alone is together. Agee has wrought a simple yet poignant social-emotional tale that little listeners will connect with. His art style is as inviting as ever in both the minimalist, thick-lined playground setting and the appealing characters. This is a classic Agee work, and a cute conversation starter. —*Ronny Khuri*

Goodbye Spring, Hello Summer.
By Kenard Pak. Illus. by the author.

May 2025. 32p. Godwin, \$18.99 (9781250151735). PreS–K.

Each season is beautiful in its own way, but as Pak shows in his Changing Seasons series, the intervals between them can be just as special. Beginning with *Goodbye Summer, Hello Autumn* (2016), each of this series' four picture books opens with one or two children walking outdoors and observing changes in the natural world. In this fourth and presumably final book, spring gives way to summer one afternoon as a girl steps out of her house and a rain shower ends. She walks across open fields, greeting the fluttering butterflies, swooping birds, and a garden of flowering plants. As open land gives way to a "bustling forest" and a schoolyard, she acknowledges the little trees and talks with young children at play. As the sun sets, the girl and her little brother walk home together. While the simply written text creates a framework for the story, some elements appear in the appealing illustrations alone, giving room for children to use their imaginations in interpreting the

narrative. An enjoyable read-aloud choice as spring gives way to summer. —*Carolyn Phelan*

Grandma's Locs.
By Karen Arthur. Illus. by Camilla Ru.

June 2025. 32p. Abrams/Tate, \$17.99 (9781849768177). K–Gr. 2.

This multigenerational love letter celebrates Blackness through the bond between a grandmother and her grandchild over their natural hair. In her debut picture book, podcast host Arthur offers rhythmic words and text that bounce on the page, much like the child's curls and springs. Ru's vibrant, energetic digitally created illustrations are inspired by quilting traditions, African prints, and Caribbean designs, elements of which swirl across the pages alongside the pair's locs and curls. Grandma's captivating, magical stories and ancestral history instill a joyful sense of pride in the child, which comes through in their appreciation for their natural hair and all it symbolizes. Whether they wear their hair in "Playful plaits! / Brilliant braids! / Twisty twists with multi-coloured bands" or just in a head wrap or hat, this affectionate grandmother and grandchild will inspire readers to "wear [their] crown proudly" and know that they are loved. This beautifully illustrated poetic story about hair as identity and generational love makes an excellent read-aloud for younger audiences. —*Rachel Chapman*

I Am NOT a Vampire.
By Miles McKenna. Illus. by Riley Samels.

May 2025. 32p. little bee, \$18.99 (9781499816235). PreS–Gr. 1.

A family portrait kicks off this charming book about self-acceptance. Fifteen people appear in it: the father wears a cape; the mother looks like Morticia Addams; all the children have pale, triangular faces and pointy ears, except for one sandy-haired boy. This boy, Arlo, declares, "I'm a vampire." His family, schoolmates, and everyone in the community are all spooky beings (ghosts, witches, werewolves, etc.) But something is off. Arlo is worried because he doesn't have fangs, and he doesn't sleep in a big-kid coffin yet. He hopes he'll find his superpowers at the annual festival celebrating the super harvest moon, and he does. Suddenly, Arlo grows fangs—and a disturbing amount of fur. His arms and legs shoot out of his clothes. Arlo has become a werewolf, and family and friends joyfully accept his new identity. The cheerfully gothic illustrations are filled with comic detail. While this could be read as a Halloween romp, it also packs an evergreen message about finding and accepting your identity—and that of others. —*Connie Fletcher*

Jeff the Frog: The Lost Hop.
By Adam Ciccio. Illus. by Natalia Bushuyeva.

May 2025. 32p. Clavis, \$18.95 (9798890630667). K–Gr. 3.

Child psychologist Ciccio uses a light touch here to show how depression can start, how it can intensify, and how support and action can defeat it. At book's start, Jeff the frog and his three froggy friends are having a ball hop-

ping lily pads, swimming, and eating bugs. But one of his friends moves away, and Jeff is devastated, losing interest in his usual pleasures. He becomes immobile, just sitting on his lost friend's old lily pad—so much so that Jeff and the lily pad are sinking. As a scribbly cloud over Jeff's head grows, indicating his deepening sadness, his baffled friends search everywhere for Jeff's lost hop, even braving the inside of an alligator's mouth to find it. Gentle pastels and humorous touches of the illustrations (including lettering that hops up and down, mimicking the frogs' frolics) add to the story's friendly tone. Finally, with the support of his friends, Jeff gets up shakily on his frog legs, starts hopping again, and is happy. A fun story whose message may stick if depression strikes. —*Connie Fletcher*

Lost in a Book.

By Chris Britt. Illus. by the author.

June 2025. 32p. Abrams, \$18.99 (9781949480542).

PreS–Gr. 3.

Two adventurous boys, Oliver and Chad, are walking across the inexplicably enormous pages of a book one day when they notice warning signs saying, “Do Not Enter,” “Stay Away,” and “Don’t Do It!” The curving page that they stand upon leads into the book’s deep, dangerous gutter. They take a running jump, leaping for the safety of the page on the other side. Oliver makes it, while Chad disappears into the gutter, where a hungry lion lurks. Bicyclists, firemen, and a librarian offer to help, but like Chad, they fall into the gutter. Only certain people can rescue these amiable victims. Turning to the book’s readers, the desperate characters plead for help, and soon they’re calling their rescuers heroes. Britt, an award-winning editorial cartoonist whose career as a writer-illustrator began with *The Most Perfect Snowman* (2016), offers a more unconventional experience here. Knocking down the fourth wall, he involves his audience in rescuing those who fell into the gutter. Meanwhile, Britt’s lively pictures draw viewers into the many amusing scenes in this droll, adventure-filled picture book. —*Carolyn Phelan*

Minh and the Magic Grains of Rice.

By Đỗ Nguyệt Hà. Illus. by Lê Phương Quỳnh. Tr. by Bac H. Tran.

May 2025. 52p. Chronicle, \$17.99 (9781979721330).

PreS–Gr. 3.

Despite rice being an important staple in his Vietnamese culture, young Minh regularly exclaims, “I won’t eat rice anymore!” After spilling rice during one of these outbursts, he hears angry voices, which turn out to come from talking rice grains. After following them through some bushes, Minh is transported to a magical place with fluffy pink clouds, majestic mountains, and tall fantastical trees, where the human-size rice grains wear traditional Vietnamese garments. One tells Minh the story of how, once upon a time, rice came from the Creator but was revoked because people took it for granted. People then had

to work hard to grow and harvest their own rice. After helping out in the long, arduous rice-harvesting process, Minh is hungry and ready to head home. Back matter provides additional information on the importance of rice, the difficult process of rice farming, and several Vietnamese art forms inspired by rice. The digital illustrations in subdued colors engagingly feature adorable cartoon characters. Overall, a whimsical exploration of conservation through a modern retelling of a Vietnamese folktale. —*Van McGary*

The Monarch.

By Kirsten Hall. Illus. by Isabelle Arsenault.

May 2025. 48p. Atheneum, \$19.99 (9781665943240).

PreS–Gr. 2.

Monarch butterfly migration begins in Canada and ends in Mexico. No one butterfly makes the entire round trip; it actually takes four or five generations to complete an annual loop. Eggs are laid at specific sites along the way, and new hatchlings instinctively take up the flight pattern and replenish the migrating swarms. This lovely picture book maps out the process, beginning with one egg laid on one milkweed leaf that morphs through larval and pupal stages, finally becoming a glorious butterfly. The text does not use any technical terms, relying instead on lyrical, rhyming sentences that evoke what the monarch sees and feels. This is especially effective when the monarch learns to fly and joins and eventually leads a large migrating group. The text appears in a font called The Honeybee, which perfectly complements the ink, gouache, watercolor, color pencil, and digital illustrations that can be light and airy or dramatic and bold, as the action demands. Just in time for spring, this offers solid introductory material and makes a great choice for reading aloud. —*Kathleen McBroom*

My Path.

By Jana Curll. Illus. by the author.

May 2025. 32p. Nosy Crow, \$18.99 (9798887772134).

PreS–Gr. 1.

A dark-gray snail with rosy cheeks invites readers to tag along as they set out to find their path through life. Everyone has a unique direction, and the tiny creature’s example encourages readers to be brave and focus on their own. As the snail explains, sometimes a path might be shared with others, but if it doesn’t feel right, they’ll veer off that path to follow one more suited to them. At times, a path might take them in circles or simply come to an end. Sometimes, if the venture feels lonely and fruitless, it might be prudent to stop, regroup, and start again in search of the correct way. When seeking the best path, asking for help may be the best method. Loneliness and discouragement may show up, but remember: “The sun will rise again, and it will be time . . . to push on.” Charming, richly colored illustrations reveal the tiny gastropod boldly looking for their individual path as they leave a trail of silver behind them on each page. —*Maryann Owen*

New.

By Niña Mata. Illus. by the author.

May 2025. 32p. Harper, \$19.99 (9780063318250).

PreS–Gr. 1.

You’re either super-excited for the first day of school or you dread it. This story’s protagonist is solidly in the thrilled category, despite being new. The sheer possibilities of this fresh start light her up. “New is exciting . . . New is imagining how many friends I’ll meet.” But once at school, newness quickly begins to feel unsettling, “strange and uncomfortable,” “different,” and “lonely.” Her openness leads her to another lonesome kid on the playground, though, and the power of play helps the pair transcend barriers like language. Digital artwork effectively shifts between a cheery full-color palette and more muted sepia tones that convey the child’s sense of isolation and worry. Framed but unhung photos alongside a rolled carpet underscore the family’s recent move, which illustrative clues suggest was from Manila to the U.S. A deeply personal and optimistic look at all the hope that newness holds, and a gentle addition to both first-day-of-school collections and immigration conversations. —*Kit Ballenger*

Nightsong.

By Sally Soweol Han. Illus. by the author.

May 2025. 40p. Bloomsbury, \$18.99 (9781547615063).

PreS–Gr. 2.

A little boy visiting adult family friends in the city languidly listens to the “TICK-TOCK” of the clock and tunes out the “blah blah” of grown-up teatime conversation. After a long day, Lewis and his mother catch a bus home to the country. When a flat tire strands the passengers alongside a field, the child, out of sheer boredom, decides to put down his handheld gaming device and explore the surroundings. Keenly interested in and attuned to the nighttime chorus, Lewis hears “beetles BUZZ and critters ZIP.” The child claps his hands as “fish SPLISH and SPLASH in time to the creek’s burbling music.” Han’s spare, poetic text offers a sensory-rich soundscape: “SCURRY,” “CREAAAK,” “HOOT HOOT, HOOT.” In the striking black-and-white, hand-drawn and -painted illustrations, onomatopoeic words and sound effects pop up in primary colors, from the loud candy-apple red “BRUMMM” and “BEEEEP!” of the bus to the bucolic green “CHIRR CHIRR” of grasshoppers. Unexpected sources of joy are revealed to be close at hand—and ear—for those who pay attention: “The songs of the night play in Lewis’s head all the way home.” This well-orchestrated, harmonious celebration of the sounds of nature hits all the right notes. —*Linda Ludke*



Piece Out.

By Alex Willan. Illus. by the author.

May 2025, 40p. Astra/Astra Young Readers, \$18.99 (9781662620935). K-Gr. 2.

In the long-standing tradition of toys having lives of their own, a red playing piece embarks on an adventure to return home after accidentally being left out of its game box. Bright, humorous cartoon illustrations will draw readers' interest immediately, and Willan clearly understands how to appeal to his young audience. Red braves the loud, hungry robot (the vacuum cleaner), finds the cave under the couch, or S.O.F.A. ("Safety Offered For All"), and even survives a brief banishment to the dreaded junk drawer. Red puts together a paper-clip ladder to escape and continue the quest to reach its goal. The fun-loving family has a tradition of Friday game nights, and Red does not want to miss out. The lighthearted text employs several game-related puns, and Red's survival gear adds visual humor as well. Finally scaling the mountainous shelf to successfully return to the game box, Red is anxious to tell best friend Yellow about the ordeal. Wait—now Yellow is missing? Is a sequel in the works? —*Lucinda Whitehurst*

Safe at Last.

By Richard Jones. Illus. by the author.

May 2025, 32p. Candlewick, \$18.99 (9781536241310). PreS-Gr. 2.

James lives on a tiny island in a comfy cottage by the sea. Every morning, he dons his red coat, hops on his trusty bicycle, and makes the rounds, greeting the otters in the water, the bunnies grazing near their burrow, and even the brown-bear family in its dark cave. The enchanted existence is upended by a fierce storm, and though James appreciates his snug shelter, he heads into the wild night to check on his neighbors. An increasingly concerned James can't find a single animal in their usual abodes, but when he returns to his house, he finds that all the animals have holed up there, worried about him. The wonderfully welcoming world is packed with coziness and kindness, though the squall provides just enough tension to keep things compelling. Softly textured mixed-media illustrations carefully capture both the sunnier side of the island existence along with the dark storm scenes, and lanterns and windows truly seem to glow from within. A gentle gem of an island adventure that readers will long to live in. —*Emily Graham*

Shoes Off, Please.

By Helena Ku Rhee. Illus. by Myo Yim.

June 2025, 40p. Random House Studio, \$18.99 (9780593649626). PreS-Gr. 3.

Mina and her friends love playing tag in their apartment building's grassy courtyard. But when Mina's mother calls, "Snacks are ready," they run to her door. Mina blocks the entryway, saying, "Don't forget the shoes-off rule." Her family follows the Korean practice of removing their shoes when entering their home, a custom common in many cultures. When Mina's friends persuade her to ignore the rule,

she acquiesces but later asks her mother about changing the rule. Mama explains that their tradition honors generations of beloved family members, including Mina's papa. Seeing the rule differently, Mina places a Remove Your Shoes sign on their door and starts a discussion of family traditions with her friends, who start taking off their shoes before entering her home. Rhee's story reflects the experiences of many immigrants' children, whose household customs may be unfamiliar to their friends and neighbors. Mina's solution is smart and imaginative but entirely believable. Created using pastels and color pencils, the illustrations portray the characters in an endearing way. An appealing picture book that could lead to worthwhile discussions. —*Carolyn Phelan*

Swept Away at Witch Camp.

By Erin Vanessa. Illus. by the author.

May 2025, 32p. Running Press Kids, \$18.99 (9780762487745). K-Gr. 2.

Sid loves being a witch, and she's a darn good one, too. She can whip up potions, cast enchantments, even divine the future. But Sid has one witchy weakness: she just can't get a handle on flying. This puts a damper on her otherwise wonderful witch camp, as she's required to participate in its traditional broomstick race. Despite her many talents, Sid questions her authenticity as a witch and grumpily informs her mothers that she's ready to quit the camp entirely. But when she brilliantly mends someone else's magical mix-up (a dish-soap-and-cheese-sauce disaster), Sid regains her confidence and dives headfirst back into the camp activities, forgoing flawlessness for fun. It's a joy to jump into the warm, witchy world rendered in bright yellows, purples, and greens (including Sid's glorious hair). Everyone has a funny familiar (an armadillo, a snail, a seal wearing a camp kerchief), and the diverse cast and Sid's casual use of a hearing aid are particularly appreciated. An exuberant exhortation to choose passion and progress over perfection. —*Emily Graham*

Time Runs like a River.

By Emma Carlisle. Illus. by the author.

May 2025, 40p. Candlewick/Templar, \$18.99 (9781536243383). K-Gr. 3.

Two children wave goodbye to two adults and spend the next few hours exploring a nearby river. Pencil-and-watercolor illustrations depict the multitude of plants and animals that make up the waterway's ecosystem: birds, deer, frogs, and mayflies, among others, move in and out of the pictures as the children walk, splash, and observe. The poetic text sometimes describes what the children see but other times contemplates the nature of time itself. One spread looks to the past, filling in buildings that exist as ruins now, considering what came before. The pairing of the flowing river and the continuum of time is ambitious but effective, and the author keeps the narrative at a level that will make sense to a child. The final images put the child characters at the center of the progression, with

sketches suggesting how they too will grow and change. The serene, encouraging tone assures young readers that they, other animals, plants, and the river are all part of this cycle and that there is much to be discovered and appreciated in the world around them. —*Lucinda Whitehurst*

The Vase with the Golden Cracks.

By Fran Nuño. Illus. by Zuzanna Celej. Tr. by Jon Brokenbrow.

May 2025, 32p. Cuento de Luz, \$19.95 (9788419464958). PreS-Gr. 3. 811.

Opening with a Japanese proverb—"A word spoken with kindness can warm three months of winter"—this book introduces readers to kintsugi, the traditional Japanese art of repairing broken pottery with lacquered gold. A young boy recalls the story of how his father collects Japanese words on slips of paper and places them into a vase. One word, *ikigai*, deeply inspires the boy in its message of self-fulfillment and purpose. After the boy accidentally bumps into the vase and it shatters on the ground, the boy's father gently uses the incident as a means to convey another word: *kintsugi*. The next day, the vase is restored with gold lines that decorate the cracks. Nuño's picture book conveys a warm and insightful message, illustrating how the scars of the past not only shape us but also represent new purpose or destiny. Complete with Celej's light and lucid watercolor illustrations that highlight the value of flaws and a bilingual glossary of the father's words, this story offers a profound look into embracing imperfection and self-fulfillment. —*Nick Mullenmeister*

Wish in a Tree.

By Lynda Mullaly Hunt. Illus. by Nancy Carpenter.

May 2025, 32p. Penguin/Nancy Paulsen, \$18.99 (9781524739683). Gr. 1-3.

Based on characters from Hunt's best-selling middle-grade novel *Fish in a Tree* (2015), this picture book brings neurodiversity to a younger audience. While his peers sit still at their desks, completing their assignments dutifully, Oliver fidgets and his "brain blazes" as he imagines his yellow no. 2 pencil as a rocket and questions zoom around his thoughts. Digitally enhanced photo-collage illustrations that feature childlike doodles and school-themed media, such as finger paint, a variety of writing papers, and real school supplies, relate Oliver's unspecified neurodivergence and the isolation he feels after classmate Shay taunts him. Like the original novel, this story uses a metaphor to help readers understand and appreciate Oliver's unique way of thinking. In this case, it's his love of ants and how they all have a colony in which they belong. Although some students occasionally talk like adults ("I would relish a brain like yours"), they also acknowledge Oliver's gifts and welcome him into their "colony." Once again, Hunt encourages compassion and self-acceptance in all readers. —*Angela Leeper*

Spotlight on Mysteries & Thrillers

Art from *Death in the Cards*, by Mia P. Manansala.

Older Readers

After We Burned.

By Marieke Nijkamp.

July 2025. 352p. Sourcebooks/Fire, \$18.99 (9781728291208). Gr. 9–12.

The night Eden and her girlfriend, Payton, try to run away, Eden breaks into her high school to get out of the rain, setting off a chain reaction that will bring Fenix, Colorado, to a flash point. How a fire destroyed Pierce High School that night, though, is only part of the story. Told from shifting points of view, including Eden's (who readers find out early on has died in that fire), this latest outing from bestselling Nijkamp lives up to her well-earned reputation, weaving a plot full of twists and oozing with a dark, atmospheric undercurrent, which is telegraphed in thoughtful trigger warnings. There is heavy symbolism surrounding the idea of rebirth by fire, especially regarding Payton's journey, which is nearly too heartbreaking for words. Almost every adult acts horribly throughout, which makes the few who help the narrators seem angelic. The simple act of telling the full truth seems impossible in this setting—whoever starts the fire, whoever screams the truth, will not make it out unscathed. A chilling mystery for readers looking for gritty depth. —*Jessica Durham*

All We Lost Was Everything.

By Sloan Harlow.

May 2025. 352p. Putnam, paper, \$14.99 (9780593855942). Gr. 9–12.

River's mother left for a hike and never came back. River's boyfriend, Noah, broke up with her on prom night, and that same night, her house burned down. River lost everything—including her father. Thankfully, she has a place to live with her cousin, Tita Anna, and her loyal best friend, Tawny, sets up a GoFundMe to alleviate costs. River is amazed when an anonymous donor sends her two million dollars. She tries not to think too hard about it, carrying on with her life and working as a waitress with Tawny at a local diner. No one is more surprised than River when her aloof coworker Logan starts showing an interest in her. This sets into motion a landslide of secrets, conspiracies, lies, and betrayals that culminate in an explosive revelation, changing everything River thought she knew. River is a sympathetic character, and her first-person-present narrative draws readers in as she peels away the layers of deceit to uncover the truth. Part mystery, part thriller, part romance, River's story is difficult to put down. —*Donna Scanlon*

A Beautiful and Terrible Murder.

By Claire M. Andrews.

Aug. 2025. 432p. Little, Brown, \$19.99 (9780316575355). Gr. 8–12.

Isaac Holland is at the top of his class at the prestigious All Souls College of Oxford University. With no prominent family connections to precede him, Isaac is a mystery to his classmates, especially the curious Sherlock Holmes and the competitive James Moriarty. But Isaac relishes this mystery, considering he is actually Irene Adler, the rebellious daughter of Oxford dean Lord Richard Moriarty and half sister to All Souls classmate James. Irene's disdain for traditional gender hierarchy led her to find an alternative for advancing her education. Irene's double life becomes dangerous when members of All Souls College start dying off one at a time, and it seems that Isaac is the main suspect. Irene, disguised as Isaac, teams up with Sherlock to try to find the killer before becoming the next victim. In this gripping mystery, Andrews reinvents classically known and loved characters to bring a little bit of romance and a lot of mayhem to the halls of Oxford. Lovers of dark academia and historical mystery will absolutely devour this book. —*Aryn Prestia*

Best of All Worlds.

By Kenneth Oppel.

June 2025. 256p. Scholastic, \$19.99 (9781546158202). Gr. 9–12.

What was supposed to be a lighthearted family vacation to their cottage in the woods turns into a years-long nightmare. When Xavier; his father, Caleb; and pregnant stepmom, Nia become unexpectedly trapped under a dome, at first, they attempt to escape. Three years later, Xavier is still mourning the absence of the family members he left behind while still reconciling his feelings about Noah, his brother who has never known anything but the dome. The prevailing theory is aliens—that the dome is an experiment, and they're the test subjects. When a family with staunchly different beliefs from the Oaks is dropped into the dome, complete with their own facsimile of a hunting lodge, the Oaks are optimistically cautious. At first, the Jacks seem friendly enough, and their oldest daughter, Mackenzie, is certainly of interest to Xavier. But as tensions among the adults come to a head, it calls into question loyalty, beliefs, and what the idea of freedom really is. This fast-paced survival thriller is a timely work that calls reality into question. —*Sam Ponke*

Death in the Cards.

By Mia P. Manansala.

May 2025. 352p. Delacorte, \$19.99 (9780593897928); paper, \$12.99 (9780593897935). Gr. 7–12.

If readers are looking for a fast-paced mystery with a little bit of tarot-reading intrigue, Manansala's YA debut, delivering a gripping story full of twists and tension and starring a main character it's impossible not to root for, is sure to fit the bill. Filipino American Danika Dizon is not your typical high-schooler: she has the fearlessness of a PI, the crime-solving instincts of a classic detective, and just enough confidence (and stubbornness) to take on a case no one else would touch. She also runs a tarot-reading side hustle at school, and when one of her clients disappears after drawing the Death card, Danika doesn't waste any time going after the answers herself. Alongside Gaby, the missing girl's sister, she starts unraveling secret after secret. Among the high-stakes drama and snarky banter, Manansala details plenty of tarot readings, which should delight tarot fans. But it's the fierce, brave, and strong-willed Danika who drives this entertaining mystery, which will keep readers guessing until the last page. —*Aurora Dominguez*

 Kill Creatures.

By Rory Power.

June 2025. 288p. Delacorte, \$19.99 (9780593302316). Gr. 9–12.

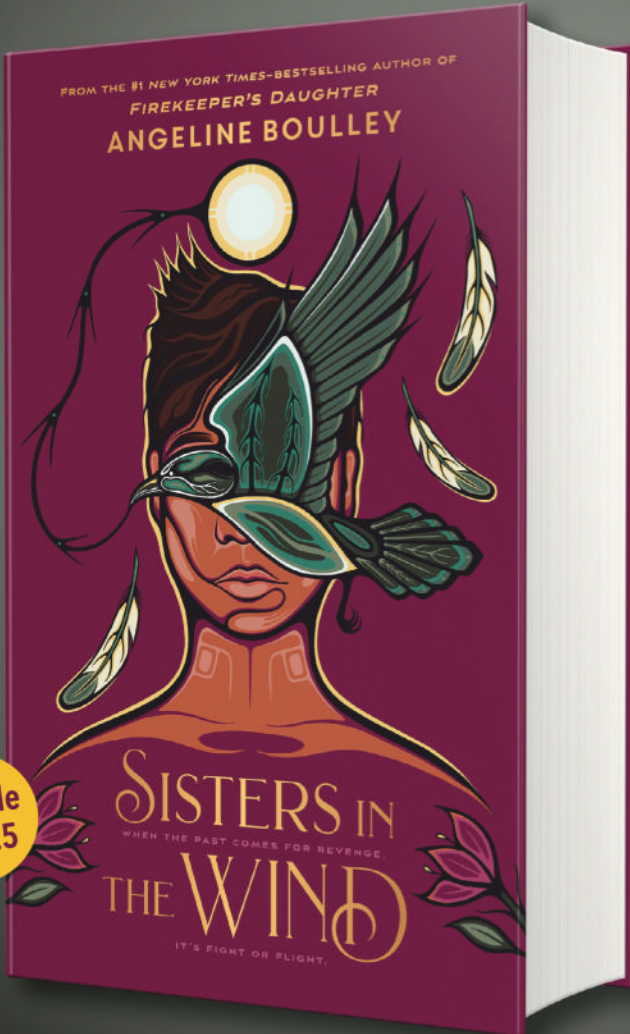
"The girls are all dead. And I should know, because I'm the one who killed them." Last summer, Nan and her best friends went to Saltcedar Canyon to explore, but they forgot the rope and anchor, so Nan stayed behind with the boat. She watched the three girls enter the canyon and waited all night, but they never came out. At least, that's the story she told the police. Now, a year later, at the vigil, Luce is found floating in the water, alive. Yet Nan vividly remembers smashing her head in with a rock. Luce doesn't seem to remember what Nan did or why, but now the police are looking for the other two again and asking new questions. Nan has to scramble to manipulate the investigation while carefully probing Luce for information, but having Luce back is dredging up memories Nan would rather keep buried. Power's tense psychological thriller alternates between the time lines, weaving together the days leading up to that fateful night last summer and the aftermath of Luce's return, telling a story of obsessive love and ultimate betrayal from Nan's intensely private perspective. Power masterfully seeds Nan's narrative with subtle clues to her unreliability that will keep readers hooked until the full truth is told—and it is a doozy. This gripping, smartly plotted thriller has high appeal. —*Krista Hutley*



Continued on p. 106

COMING SOON FROM NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING
AND PRINTZ AWARD WINNING AUTHOR

ANGELINE BOULLEY



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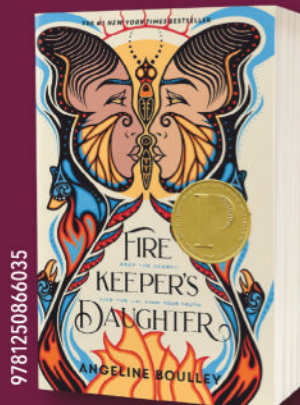
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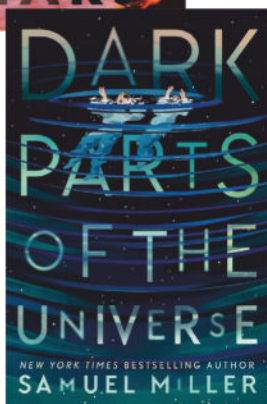
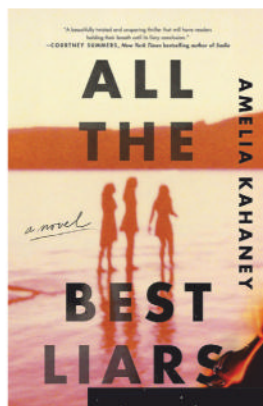


Art from S.T.A.G.S., by M. A. Bennett.

Booklist Essentials

Wealth Gap Mysteries

by Sarah Hunter



Money may not be able to buy happiness, but it can buy a fleet of attorneys, “expert” witnesses, and, of course, just straight-up silence in the case of a murder investigation. Gaps in access to resources make true justice harder to grasp—and doubly so if those class differences intersect with race. In the following mysteries, ranging from classic Christie-like whodunits to searing commentaries inspired by contemporary topics, teen characters learn firsthand how wealth affects access to justice as they struggle to uncover the truth against nearly impossible odds.

All the Best Liars. By Amelia Kahaney. 2022. 336p. Flatiron (9781250312709). Gr. 9–12.

Sydney’s two best friends are suddenly much richer than she is, which corrodes their long-standing friendship by senior year. Drawing pointed attention to the gulf between the rich and poor, Kahaney’s sharp mystery will be poignant for readers experiencing economically turbulent times.

Compound Fracture. By Andrew Joseph White. 2024. 384p. Peachtree Teen (9781682636121). Gr. 9–12.

While it has fewer of the hallmark touchstones of the mystery genre, White’s pointed novel follows Miles as he seeks out the truth about an “accidental” death and aims to put an end to a blood feud in his West Virginia town. Meanwhile, White eloquently and hauntingly explores

the devastating impact of economic injustice and generational poverty and trauma.

The Cousins. By Karen M. McManus. 2020. 336p. Delacorte (9780525708001). Gr. 9–12.

Three cousins are astounded to be invited to their estranged, wealthy grandmother’s island estate, since she disinherited their parents decades ago. Determined to find out why, they learn shocking secrets about their parents and one another.

Dark Parts of the Universe. By Samuel Miller. 2024. 432p. HarperCollins/Katherine Tegen (9780063160484). Gr. 9–12.

A mysterious app leads white Willie Eckles to the site of a murder in his small Missouri town of Calico Springs, and as he investigates, he uncovers deep secrets about Calico Springs and the predomi-

nantly Black town across the river, his town's history of entrenched racism, and the unsettling truth behind the adamant wealthy landowners opposing progress.

Hollow Fires. By Samira Ahmed. 2022. 416p. Little, Brown (9780316282642). Gr. 9–12.

Student journalist Safiya is determined to find the killer of an Iraqi refugee teen in her area and puts her own safety in increasing jeopardy in the process. Ahmed tackles not only racism and Islamophobia but the intersection of wealth, white privilege, and far-right radicalization with depth and nuance in this fast-paced mystery.

I'm the Girl. By Courtney Summers. 2022. 352p. St. Martin's/Wednesday (9781250808363). Gr. 9–12.

Beautiful Georgia's obsessed with getting into Aspera, a gated community that caters to the wealthy with extreme discretion. When she finally does, she discovers the mangled body of a classmate's sister and starts digging deeper. Summers adroitly and boldly explores privileged decadence in this raw page-turner.

Invisible Son. By Kim Johnson. 2023. 416p. Random (9780593482100). Gr. 9–12.

Andre is home from juvie and eager to connect with his friend Eric—but Eric is nowhere to be found, and Mr. Whitaker, Eric's white adoptive father, doesn't seem to be telling the truth. Overlapping issues around gentrification, race, and justice amplify this eloquent, gripping mystery.

Kill Her Twice. By Stacey Lee. 2024. 400p. Putnam (9780593532041). Gr. 9–12.

In 1930 L.A., the Chow sisters live a modest life running their father's flower shop in Chinatown. When movie star Lulu Wong is found dead and the police don't seem especially interested in solving the crime, the sisters piece together clues that might implicate the highest echelons of LA society.

Liar's Beach. By Katie Cotugno. 2023. 288p. Delacorte (9780593433287). Gr. 8–11.

In this gender-swapped take on Agatha Christie's *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, Linden hides his working-class background while spending some time at his wealthy friend's family estate. When a body turns up, Linden and his childhood friend Holiday Proctor struggle to solve the mystery.

The Lies They Tell. By Gillian French. 2018. 304p. HarperTeen (9780062642585). Gr. 9–12.

Pearl works hard at the country club, especially since her father, an estate caretaker for a wealthy family, has become a pariah in the wake of a fatal fire that resulted in four deaths. As Pearl tries to clear her father's name, she stumbles into a web of brutal family dynamics and class disparities.

The Meadowbrook Murders. By Jessica Goodman. 2025. 336p. Putnam (9780593698716). Gr. 9–12.

When Amy's boarding-school roommate is murdered, suspicion falls on Amy's boyfriend—a townie—and she's desperate to protect him. After she teams up with the driven editor of the school newspaper, Amy's search for the truth reveals, among other things, the seamier aspects of wealth and privilege.

Promise Boys. By Nick Brooks. 2023. 400p. Holt (9781250866974). Gr. 9–12.

Three students from a prep school for marginalized kids are the prime suspects in the murder of their principal, who was known for his draconian, vindictive rules and hobnobbing with wealthy vendors. This multi-voiced mystery offers a well-rounded, revealing picture of the boys and their tense investigation.

Suddenly a Murder. By Lauren Muñoz. 2023. 320p. Putnam (9780593617533). Gr. 9–12.

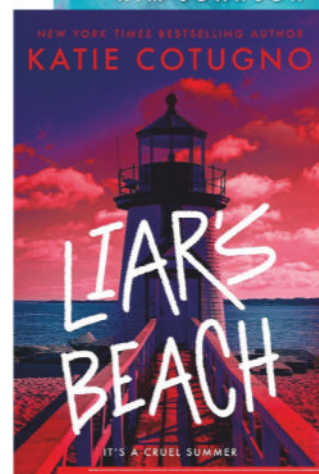
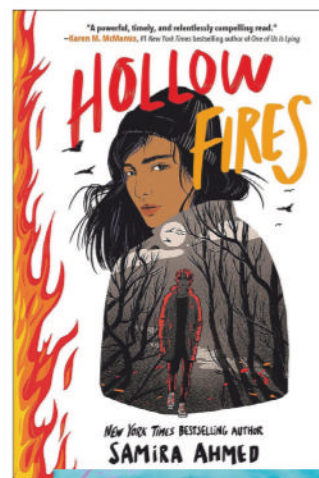
Izzy, a scholarship kid, joins her wealthy private-school friends at a mansion-museum for a 1920s-themed graduation party. When one of the teens is murdered, Izzy is accused based on an ambiguous motive, but soon she's snooping around the mansion collecting clues.

S.T.A.G.S. By M. A. Bennett. 2018. 304p. Delacorte (9780525578468). Gr. 9–12.

Scholarship student Greer is used to being harangued by her ultra-wealthy, connected classmates, so she's surprised to be invited to the manor house of one of the wealthiest for a luxurious weekend of "huntin' shootin' fishin'"—only, something's off. A thrilling page-turner with an undeniably intriguing hook.

Wander in the Dark. By Jumata Emill. 2024. 400p. Delacorte (9780593651858). Gr. 9–12.

Amir is falsely accused of the murder of a rich, white girl in what most people see as an open-and-shut case, but his wealthy half brother, with whom he has a less-than-easy relationship, will stop at nothing to prove his innocence.



Continued from p.102

Kill the Lax Bro.

By Charlotte Lillie Balogh.

June 2025. 384p. Delacorte, \$19.99 (9780593899274). Gr. 9–12.

Kill the Lax Bro is exactly what the neon-green cover with pink-glitter-lip-gloss lettering promises: a love letter to the 1990s wrapped in a psychologically twisted whodunit. The year is 1999, and five students find themselves trapped with the dead body of star lacrosse player Troy Richards (the perfectly named “lax bro” of the title) at a high-school lock-in the night before graduation. Each narrator tells their version of events leading up to and during the lock-in through alternating chapters named after ’90s hits. Excessive pop-culture references aside, the individual characters’ voices make this fast-paced mystery shine. Tatum, the drug-dealing smart-ass supersenior, is the standout; the Judd Nelson of this *Breakfast Club*-style bunch, she’s bent on revenge to keep her own secrets safe. Whether she or anyone else would cross the line to murder is the root of the tension galloping through the novel. Balogh’s experience writing for TV clearly comes through in the stellar quippy and sarcastic dialogue. Fans of Karen M. McManus or Diana Urban will devour this book. —*Jessica Durham*

Lady or the Tiger.

By Heather M. Herrman.

June 2025. 336p. Penguin/Nancy Paulsen, \$19.99 (9781984816733). Gr. 9–12.

When Belle King (alias Alice Springer or The Seamstress) gives herself up to the lawmen of Dodge City, no one can believe it. Still, she is insistent that she hang for the murders correctly attributed to her. But what starts as an open-and-shut case becomes a circus when her ex-husband—a man she knows she killed—returns as a federal marshal, fighting to clear her name. However, nothing is as it seems. With one of the world’s biggest diamonds at stake, everyone who can get close to Belle wants to know where she’s hidden the treasure before her untimely end. But Belle is more interested in the truth—confessing the details of her dust-coated, blood-soaked life full of murder and treasure, shifting alliances, and flat-out double crosses—all with her in the center fighting to keep her soul. Herrman has created a rare kind of book: a twist-filled murder mystery dressed up in leather boots, spurs, and a cowboy hat. She does not shirk on the details, with language and violence befitting the Wild West; gunplay and mistreatment of women in that age are central to the plot, but neither is gratuitous. The writing is compelling and visceral, with a multitude of colorful, complex characters, including the ferocious, canny protagonist. For readers who enjoy a propulsive narrative, this is a special one indeed. —*Reinhardt Suarez*



Now She’s Dead.

By Roselyn Clarke.

June 2025. 400p. Sourcebooks/Fire, paper, \$12.99 (9781464223488). Gr. 8–12.

The last place Mandy Jenkins wants to be is at the Highmark Resort, her family’s summer vacation spot. This is the first summer without her best friend Sara, who died there the year before. Mandy is pretty sure she was responsible for Sara’s “accidental” death, and now she’s caught in a snarl of lies to avoid suspicion and blame. After spending the past year hiding from her family at college, her reunion with her parents and younger sister, Kelsey, is awkward. Even worse, Kelsey brought Natalie, a true-crime enthusiast who has decided she is going to solve the mystery of Sara’s death. But after rummaging through her memories, Mandy wonders whether she caused Sara’s death and starts considering the possibility that someone else may have committed foul play. The narrative cycles between the present and the past year and does a great job of making each of Mandy’s suspects viable candidates, as well as demonstrating how bossy and manipulative Sara was. While the book is mostly plot-driven, Mandy and the other characters are fleshed out. —*Donna Scanlon*

The Thrashers.

By Julie Soto.

May 2025. 352p. St. Martin’s/Wednesday, \$20 (9781250377173). Gr. 9–12.

The latest twisty thriller from Soto takes a page from *Mean Girls* in a gripping exploration of toxic female friendships and their consequences. Jodi Dillon is a reluctant member of an elite high-school clique called The Thrashers for their connection to golden-boy Zack Thrasher. She enjoys the feeling of fitting in but nonetheless questions if it’s emotionally healthy to follow along. The group’s confident facade crashed at the end of junior year when a classmate, Emily, died by suicide after being shunned by them. Now, in their senior year, an investigation into the truth behind Emily’s death brings up accusations of bullying and harassment, and the deeper Jodi digs to find the truth, the more she questions her friends and herself, challenging her assumptions about loyalty and morality and enlightening herself to the inner struggles of everyone around her. Soto deftly offers a realistic and layered portrayal of friendships and a sharp critique of toxic cliques. Both thrilling and thought-provoking, this haunting novel examining the complexities of competition, jealousy, and insecurity is an engrossing look at teen social dramas. —*Aurora Dominguez*

Up in Smoke.

By Nick Brooks.

May 2025. 256p. Holt, \$19.99 (9781250359933). Gr. 9–12.

Brooks (*Promise Boys*, 2024) offers another compelling whodunit with this story of a shooting at protest. In the sweltering D.C. summer, Cooper’s feeling aimless, since the teen jobs program he was relying on was unceremoniously canceled. When his best friend, Jay, recruits him to stand watch during a

smash-and-grab, he reluctantly follows. Soon, though, he’s toting thousands in stolen goods during a protest when a murder occurs, in which Jay’s the top suspect. Cooper joins up with Jay’s sharp, determined sister, Monique, to prove Jay’s innocence while trying to conceal his own involvement. Brooks’ cinematic mystery is full of twists involving crooked cops and charismatic leaders. Brooks treats the issues of disinvestment in Black communities with plenty of meaningful nuance, including how the precarity of systemic poverty can ease the way for bad actors to take advantage of vulnerable communities. Teens who love procedural detective TV shows will appreciate this satisfying mystery. —*Sarah Hunter*

We Won’t All Survive.

By Kate Alice Marshall.

July 2025. 336p. Viking, paper, \$12.99 (9780593691830). Gr. 9–12.

Mercy Gray has always been resilient. It’s how she managed to save lives—including her younger sister’s—during a mass shooting. It’s how she went on to recover from the bullet that nearly killed her. And it’s exactly why she’s been invited to compete in a high-stakes reality show spearheaded by a tech-bro billionaire with an obsessive survival-of-the-fittest mentality. Mercy is initially skeptical, but the promise of a substantial cash prize in the face of considerable medical debt pushes her forward. When she and the other contestants arrive at the off-grid location, they find the set eerily empty. Then the automated gates trap them inside, forcing them to play an increasingly dangerous game—one that will lead to the kind of bloodshed Mercy hoped never to witness again. Marshall delivers an intense, pulse-pounding thriller that tactfully explores themes like trauma and toxic masculinity while never letting go of the throttle. Full of twists, turns, and catharsis, Marshall’s latest is comparable to her 2018 offering, *I Am Still Alive*, and *The Woods Are Always Watching* (2021), by Stephanie Perkins. —*Ricardo Reading*

When Devils Sing.

By Xan Kaur.

May 2025. 400p. Holt, \$21.99 (9781250357175). Gr. 8–12.

Sam makes a deal with the devil to save her younger brother after a car crash. Neera wishes to make it big in music and settle her immigrant family’s debts. Isaiah contemplates his future at Harvard and a mysterious email. Sam plans to leave his rich family behind on his eighteenth birthday. All four of these recent high-school graduates are pulled together by the mysterious disappearance of Dawson Sumter, who got in too deep as an acolyte to the rich and powerful of Lake Clearwater, a gated community that grows richer as the nearby town of Carrion exists in squalor. Set in southwest Georgia, this humid horror-thriller moves through the four teen narrators who grapple with finding Dawson and fighting a supernatural force (fueled by an emerging 13-year cicada brood) preying on their deepest desires. Kaur’s debut offers nu-

ance to the Deep South, acknowledging the politics, religious fervor, and racial tensions often attributed to Southerners with depth and care. Pass to fans of mystery crossed with supernatural forces, such as Andrew Joseph White's *Compound Fracture* (2024). —*Kelly Ferreira*

When We Go Missing.

By April Henry.

May 2025. 272p. Little, Brown/Christy Ottaviano, \$19.99 (9780316479998). Gr. 9–12.

Seventeen-year-old Willow loves photography and animals, so her volunteer job as photographer for the animal shelter Finding Home is the perfect fit. Since the shelter is underfunded and understaffed, she also knows how to do every other job. While out walking one of the shelter dogs, she finds a camera card, and when she looks at it to see if she can figure out to whom it belongs, she is disturbed to see it is filled with pictures of young women, some of whom look frightened. The police aren't very interested in it, so Willow, along with new volunteer Dare, decide to investigate. When she learns that a few of the girls are actually missing, she becomes convinced that a serial killer is on the loose. The police are still not interested, so she tries to get the killer's attention on her own. The fast-paced plot is narrated from three perspectives: Willow's, Dare's, and the serial killer's, which keeps the pages turning. Known for her deeply suspenseful novels, Henry has done it again. —*Donna Scanlon*

Your Final Moments.

By Jay Coles.

June 2025. 320p. Scholastic, \$19.99 (9781546125563). Gr. 9–12.

High-school student Hakeem is struggling. He is recovering from drug addiction and his best friend, Miles, has died by suicide. While trying to process his grief, he's shocked when his phone rings and Miles is on the other end. Hakeem isn't the only one getting phone calls; Miles' ex-girlfriend, Mikki, is getting them as well. What surprises them most is that Miles reveals that his death was not a suicide but murder. As Hakeem endeavors to discover the truth about Miles' death, he finds a meaningful connection with Eliza from his Narcotics Anonymous meeting that might even lead to love. Suicide, gang violence, teen pregnancy, and grief are just some of the topics covered throughout Cole's newest novel. While the subject matter is difficult, it is ultimately a hopeful story that follows Hakeem's journey through his depression and grief with the support of his family and friends. A heavy but rewarding choice for fans of realistic fiction. —*Ashley Leffel*

Middle Readers

The Accidental Stowaway.

By Judith Eagle. Illus. by Jo Rioux.

July 2025. 288p. Candlewick/Walker, \$18.99 (9781536233629). Gr. 3–6.

Esme "Patch" (short for Crosspatch) Leon-

Top 10 Mysteries & Thrillers for Youth

Reviewed in *Booklist* between May 1, 2024, and April 1, 2025, these Top 10 MG and YA mysteries are marked by representation that is diverse in age, race, culture, and ability. —*Ronny Khuri*

Benny on the Case. By Wesley King. 2025. 288p. Simon & Schuster/Paula Wiseman (9781665937696). Gr. 3–6.

Friends Benny and Salma harness their love of true-crime podcasts as they endeavor to solve a string of thefts at a retirement home.

Cream Buns and Crime: Tips, Tricks, and Tales from the Detective Society. By Robin Stevens. 2024. 288p. Simon & Schuster (9781665919463). Gr. 4–7.

This compilation from supersleuths Daisy and Hazel helps young readers become detectives by sharing resources containing story, instructions, and history on the topic.

A Darker Mischief. By Derek Milman. 2024. 384p. Scholastic (9781339009933). Gr. 9–12.

In this queer dark-academia mystery, closeted sophomore Cal transfers to Essex Academy, where he joins a secret society and discovers its secrets.

Death at Morning House. By Maureen Johnson. 2024. 384p. HarperTeen (9780063255951). Gr. 9–12.

Featuring dual time lines with a sapphic-romance side plot, this smart, suspenseful, and hilarious mystery has a deadpan voice and is full of quirky charm.

Fowl Play. By Kristin O'Donnell Tubb. 2024. 288p. HarperCollins/Katherine Tegen (9780063274037). Gr. 4–7.

After her beloved uncle's death, Chloe is tipped off by his African gray parrot and enlists the help of her family to prove he was murdered.

Harriet Hound. By Kate Foster. Illus. by Sophie Beer. 2024. 176p. Candlewick (9781536238105). Gr. 1–4.

In the Australian town of Labrador, eight-year-old Harriet is an autistic super sleuth who solves mysteries around town with the help of local shelter dogs.

Out of Air. By Rachel Reiss. 2025. 304p. St. Martin's/Wednesday (9781250366146). Gr. 8–12.

A deep-sea dive into a breathtaking cave leaves Phoebe and the Salt Squad cursed in this artful thriller full of airtight tension and robust character development.

Perfect Little Monsters. By Cindy R. X. He. 2024. 336p. Sourcebooks/Fire (9781728293394). Gr. 9–12.

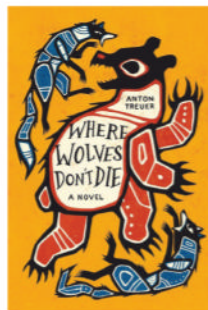
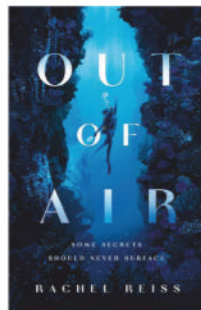
This dark, propulsive psychological thriller follows high-school senior Dawn Foster, who's investigating the murder of a cruel fellow cheerleader.

A Split Second. By Janae Marks. 2024. 256p. Harper (9780063212367). Gr. 4–7.

After awakening six months in the future, Cora must try to repair fractured friendships and unravel the mystery of her unusual situation.

Where Wolves Don't Die. By Anton Treuer. 2024. 320p. Levine Querido (9781646143818). Gr. 9–12.

In this suspenseful novel of wilderness survival, after his bully's house goes up in flames, Ezra (Ojibwe) is sent into tribal lands to work trap lines with his grandpa.



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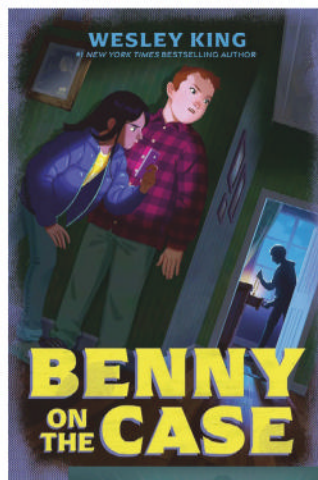


Art from *The Misfits Club*, by Kieran Crowley.

Booklist Essentials

Kid Detectives

by Julia Smith



In 2013, former *Booklist* editor Ilene Cooper pulled together a “Nancy Drew Redux” list, and in 2019 I rounded up a cadre of girl detectives. While I still stand by the recommendations, it’s 2025, by gum, and it’s time for an update—and one that’s not limited to just ladies. In this mix of standalone whodunits and mystery series for middle-graders, you’ll meet solo sleuths, detective duos, and gangs of gumshoes.

Benny on the Case. By Wesley King. 2025. 288p. Simon & Schuster/Paula Wiseman (9781665937696). Gr. 3–6.

Friends Benny Brooks, who has mosaic Down syndrome, and new-girl Salma are introduced in this cozy mystery, in which a series of thefts threatens a local retirement home. Benny and Salma lean into a love of true-crime podcasts and start their own investigation.

Chester Keene Cracks the Code. By Kekla Magoon. 2022. 304p. Random/Wendy Lamb (9781524715991). Gr. 4–7.

Quiet, methodical Chester is honing his spy skills to follow in his absent father’s footsteps. His dad’s latest cryptic communiqué brings Chester a mystery-solving partner in Skye, but is the duo ready to go where these clues lead? An emotionally intelligent caper for fans of scavenger

hunts, puzzles, and stories of building new family.

The Curious League of Detectives and Thieves: Egypt’s Fire. By Tom Phillips. 2022. 352p. Pixel+Ink (9781645951056). Gr. 4–7.

When a jewel is stolen from New York’s Museum of Natural History, orphan John Boarhog becomes the unlikely protégé of Inspector Toadius McGee. This clever, fast-paced mystery kicks off a series that is sprinkled with humor and life lessons.

Danica dela Torre, Certified Sleuth. By Mikaela Lucido. Illus. by Joanna Cacao. 2024. 224p. Annick (9781773218960). Gr. 3–6.

Eleven-year-old Danica and best-friend Jack run the Unofficial Official Renley Crow Detective Club, and they’re not thrilled when their competition comes

knocking at their door. New neighbor (and kid sleuth) Kennedy Fang needs help solving a paranormal mystery.

Finally, Something Mysterious. By Doug Cornett. 2020. 256p. Knopf (9781984830036). Gr. 3–6.

A trio of friends cracks the case when sabotage is suspected at the annual Bratwurst Bonanza. Paul, Shanks, and Peephole (aka “The One and Onlys”) are determined to wade through the clues to find the culprit. A light, punny whodunit followed by *Finally, Something Dangerous* (2022).

The Improbable Tales of Baskerville Hall. By Ali Standish. 2023. 336p. Harper, \$18.99 (9780063275577). Gr. 4–7.

A young, impoverished Arthur Conan Doyle is invited to attend an elite, secretive boarding school named Baskerville Hall. Peppered with allusions to Sherlock Holmes, this well-written series starter deals with a suspicious secret society and unsettling misdeeds.

Jada Sly, Artist & Spy. By Sherri Winston. 2019. 263p. Little, Brown (9780316505369). Gr. 3–6.

Jada Sly’s mother supposedly died in an airplane crash, but Jada is certain her mom is still alive and working as a spy. With the help of new friends in the International PIE Society, a secret group of spies in training, Jada hunts down her one lead—a note her mother left behind.

The Last Last-Day-of-Summer. By Lamar Giles. Illus. by Dapo Adeola. 2019. 304p. Harper/Versify (9781328460837). Gr. 4–7.

When time in offbeat Logan County freezes on the last day before school starts again, cousins Otto and Sheed are on the case, eager to solve the mystery behind the phenomenon and win acclaim. This marks the first Legendary Alston Boys Adventure, but two more await.

The Magic Misfits. By Neil Patrick Harris. 2017. 224p. Little, Brown, \$16.99 (9780316391825). Gr. 3–5.

Jaded runaway Carter finds belonging in Mineral Wells, where he meets jovial Mr. Vernon and five kids with a gift for stage magic. When a traveling carnival comes to town, the kids must pool their talents to unravel its nefarious designs. First in a four-book series.

The Misfits Club. By Kieran Crowley. 2018. 320p. Feiwel and Friends (9781250079268). Gr. 4–7.

When a new girl moves into their

neighborhood, Misfit Club members Brian, Hannah, and twin brothers Chris and Sam decide to see if she has what it takes to join. In the process, they stumble upon a mystery filled with stolen jewelry, art, and exotic animals.

Montgomery Bonbon: Murder at the Museum. By Alasdair Beckett-King. Illus. by Claire Powell. 2025. 288p. Candlewick (9781529501049). Gr. 3–6.

Bonnie Montgomery moonlights as a mustachioed P.I. in this terrifically tongue-in-cheek British import that boasts all the trappings of a classic whodunit. In Bonbon’s first outing, he investigates a suspicious murder and a theft at a local museum.

Premeditated Myrtle. By Elizabeth C. Bunce. 2020. 368p. Algonquin (9781616209186). Gr. 5–8.

In Victorian England, 12-year-old Myrtle bucks gender expectations by applying her above-average intellect, passions for justice and science, and fondness for detective stories to investigating crimes most foul—such as a deadly bubble bath. First in the five-book Myrtle Hardcastle Mystery series.

Sherlock Sam and the Missing Heirloom in Katong. By A. J. Low. Illus. by Andrew Tan. 2016. 112p. Andrews McMeel (9781449477899). Gr. 2–4.

Place and culture assume prominent roles in this series kickoff starring a 10-year-old sleuth in Singapore. Samuel Tan Cher Lock’s main interests are food and solving mysteries, so when his aunt’s treasured volume of family recipes goes missing, he’s immediately on the case.

Shirley and Jamila Save Their Summer. By Gillian Goerz. Art by the author. 2020. 224p. Dial (9780525552857). Gr. 4–7.

Ten-year-old Jamila Waheed is dreading

summer in her new town, but oddball Shirley Bones proves an interesting new friend with a knack for solving mysteries. While helping find a stolen gecko, Jamila is drawn into some serious neighborhood drama. A light graphic-novel mystery rooted in friendship. The sleuthing continues in *Shirley and Jamila’s Big Fall* (2021).

Trouble at the Tangerine. By Gillian McDunn. 2024. 288p. Bloomsbury (9781547611003). Gr. 4–6.

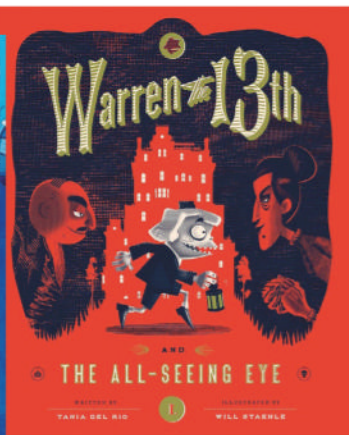
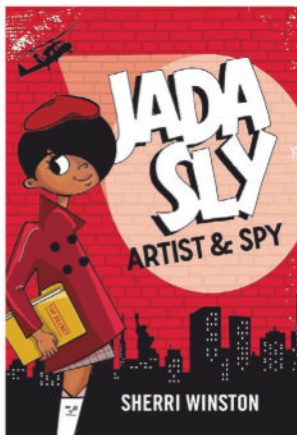
During the chaos of a fire alarm, a valuable necklace is stolen from a resident at the Tangerine Pines apartments. Simon and his neighbor Amaya decide to investigate the crime by interviewing the building’s residents and consulting with a retired detective.

The Van Gogh Deception. By Deron Hicks. 2017. 320p. Clarion (9780544759275). Gr. 5–8.

Multiple mysteries are afoot when a boy with no memory is found at the National Gallery of Art. The boy is named Art by his new foster sister, Camille, and the two embark on a journey to uncover who he is, bringing them into contact with kidnappers and a van Gogh–forgery scheme. Two more art-driven capers follow this fast-paced entrée.

Warren the 13th and the All-Seeing Eye. By Tania del Rio. Illus. by Will Staehle. 2015. 224p. Quirk (9781594748035). Gr. 3–6.

Young Warren is saddled with all the grunt work of running his uncle and aunt’s once-grand hotel. When a hunt for a legendary object takes place on the hotel’s grounds, Warren joins the search. This trilogy starter is a madcap gothic mystery filled with puzzles, cryptic clues, and quirky characters.



Continued from p.107

ard has been “passed from pillar to post” her whole life, moving through a string of relatives’ homes as a result of having neither a father (dead) nor a mother (abscinded). Her newest placement has barely begun when Patch rushes headlong into a grand adventure. Conned by a ship’s boy, a furious Patch pursues him onto the RMS *Glorious*, only for the luxury liner to set sail while she’s still aboard. Fortunately, Patch bumps into another girl her age who eagerly agrees to help Patch hide in plain sight as a first-class passenger. Eagle populates the steamship with quirky, memorable characters and creates a fascinating world in miniature as the girls scurry between decks and class divides. The stakes are raised when the girls begin to suspect certain passengers of being up to no good and become entangled with their dangerous scheme. As Patch puzzles out who they really are and what they’re up to, several other secrets come to light. Wonderfully scrappy and bighearted, Patch is a protagonist readers will cheer on. —*Julia Smith*

Billions to Burn.

By Taylor Banks.

May 2025. 336p. Disney/Melissa de la Cruz, \$16.99 (9781368110419). Gr. 4-7.

Seventh-grader Zeus has grown up learning about his ancestor Amadeus I and his magazine, *BURN!!!*, which spotlighted Black writers and artists during the Harlem Renaissance. Unfortunately, it only put out one issue before its headquarters was burned to the ground with Amadeus inside. Prior to his passing, Amadeus gifted the other magazine founders framed copies of *BURN!!!*, each with a cryptic note reading, “Find what I’ve hidden. Bring back what was stolen. Return liberty’s billions to their rightful owners.” Those who have tried to solve the mystery he left behind have all disappeared, and Zeus’ grandfather is the latest casualty in the search for Amadeus’ billions. In response, Zeus gathers the three remaining founding descendants of *BURN!!!* to try to save his grandfather and finally solve the mystery. The book is told through the alternating perspectives of Zeus and fellow founding descendant 11-year-old Charlie, and readers will discover a wealth of information on the Harlem Renaissance while trying to solve puzzles along with the main characters. A fun mystery packed with puzzles and history that will delight middle-grade readers. —*Ashley Leffel*



Blood in the Water.

By Tiffany D. Jackson.

July 2025. 272p. Scholastic, \$18.99 (9781338849912). Gr. 5-8.

Kaylani McKinnon is not happy about spending the summer in Martha’s Vineyard with friends of her grandmother, the Watsons. Their two granddaughters are stuck up, and she doesn’t feel like she belongs in the bougie social scene of the African American Vineyard elite. All Kaylani wants to do is have her daily

phone call with her dad and work on finding evidence to prove his innocence and get him out of jail. When a teenage boy she meets on her first day at the Vineyard winds up dead, Kaylani has to discover whether the sharks that supposedly killed him live in or out of the water. In her middle-grade debut, Jackson brings her trademark thrills and twists to a younger audience with riveting adeptness. Each character has unique problems and motives that will keep readers on their toes as they try to unravel the truth behind the teen’s death. In addition to the mystery, the African American history and cultural significance of Martha’s Vineyard are sprinkled throughout, adding further depth to the setting. This is a must-purchase mystery for all middle-grade collections and hopefully not the last we see from Jackson in this space. —*Ashley Leffel*



HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY:

Though her large fan base is comprised of YA readers, award winner Jackson’s sterling reputation ensures there will be considerable interest in her middle-grade debut.

The Bug Bandits.

By Jenni L. Walsh.

May 2025. 224p. Zonderkidz, \$18.99 (9780310167921). Gr. 3-6.

Growing up living and working at an insectarium in Philadelphia means everything to Liberty James. She particularly loves the pipevine swallowtail butterfly and proposes a summer program about the species, with any funds raised going towards visiting her best friend, Emmy, who recently moved to Texas. Liberty is forced to widen her friendship circle when a boy from school, Cam, is hired to touch up the paint on the museum’s murals. The plot heats up when the kids overhear strangers talking about robbing the insectarium while Liberty’s dad is away at a business meeting. They inform the police, who take the threat seriously, but it is ultimately up to the kids to hatch a plan to thwart the thieves. Clearly fans of *Home Alone*, Cam, Liberty, and Emmy (via FaceTime) create booby traps that mimic the protective instincts of insects (smoke bombs like bombardier beetles, deafening cicada chirps, etc.). Insect lovers will be drawn in from the beginning, but those searching for mystery will have to read longer to enjoy this creepy-crawly detective story. —*Diana Ford*

Confessions of a Junior Spy.

By Rosaria Munda.

June 2025. 224p. Feiwel and Friends, \$19.99 (9781250363800). Gr. 3-6.

Welcome to the Pangean Hotel, a sanctuary for spies and their families. As the daughter of a high-ranking spy (her mother) and the hotel chef (her father), Beatrice has grown up at the Pangean and is eager to get her Knack (special talent) and begin her spy training in earnest. However, Beatrice’s mother wants her

to go to “normal” (non-spy) boarding school before committing to a clandestine life in the Pangean League. It’s a bleak but seemingly unavoidable prospect until a “Normal” family seeks sanctuary at the hotel under mysterious and dangerous circumstances. Beatrice and her best friend, Tommy, befriend the new girl, Chantal, and the trio decides to take action when a ransom note arrives at the Pangean. Rogue agents, assassins, lessons in spycraft, hidden weapons, and fast cars add excitement and intrigue to the plot’s quick pace. Beatrice’s relationship with her mother is relatable and a pleasure to watch develop, particularly for its idiosyncrasies. An entertaining and imaginative story that indicates more adventures are to come. —*Ana Menchaca*

Horse Camp.

By Carrie Seim.

May 2025. 256p. Penguin Workshop, \$17.99 (9780593754009). Gr. 4-7.

Willa gets the opportunity to live out all her #HorseGirl dreams when she receives an anonymous scholarship to Juniper Ranch Horse Camp. Alongside her friends (and frenemy Amara) from her barn back home, Willa improves her skills and transforms from novice rider to confident horse handler. She bonds with friends new and old as well as with her trusty horse, Bandit. A camp mystery unfolds when Amara’s show horse, Silver Streak, goes missing, and the last person to see him is Willa. She must carefully sift through her list of suspects and piece together clues to regain the faith of Amara and safely bring back Silver Streak. Puzzle pieces connect for a slightly unpredictable and completely sweet resolution, seeing strengthening friendships, solutions to every problem, and plenty of affection for the horse-loving community. Willa’s humorous voice is heard through footnotes explaining terminology as well as countless horse puns. A stepping stone to the Saddlehill Academy series and perfect for any horse lover, regardless of whether they read Seim’s previous book, *Horse Girl* (2021). —*Diana Ford*

The House of Found Objects.

By Jo Beckett-King.

July 2025. 288p. Simon & Schuster, \$17.99 (9781665967174). Gr. 4-7.

While 12-year-old Bea’s parents are attending an out-of-town conference, Bea flies from New Jersey to Paris to stay for three weeks with an aunt who is too busy with work to show her around the city. One morning, Bea finds a cryptic letter addressed to her. She spends the day helping her grandmother, Mamie, at her failing antique shop. There, she meets her cousin, Céline, who is one year older but vastly more sophisticated and preoccupied with her friends. When Mamie discovers that a family treasure, a portrait painting by Matisse, has been stolen from the shop, Bea links the crime to the clues in her puzzling letter. Soon, Bea and Céline follow the clues to solve the mystery. Young readers will sympathize with Bea and her convinc-

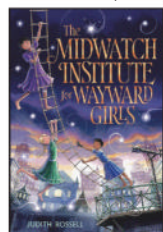
ingly tween-age dilemmas, but only devoted cryptography fans will attempt to decode the clues delivered to her. Still, readers who know a little French will enjoy the occasional use of common phrases, which are explained within the text. A relatively quiet mystery story with a surprising solution. —*Carolyn Phelan*

★ **The Midwatch Institute for Wayward Girls.**

By Judith Russell.

May 2025. 320p. Dial, \$18.99 (9798217002405). Gr. 3-7.

Maggie Fishbone knows her prospects are grim when she gets chunked out of the orphanage for pushing a boy into the harbor (he deserved it) and deposited at the Midwatch



Institute for Orphans, Runaways, and Wayward Girls. Imagine her surprise when the Institute's strict, drudgery-forward reputation is nothing but a front for giving its girls an unconventional education,

with such classes as fencing, maps, motorcars, observing, contriving, hiding, dancing, and climbing. As one of the first-years aptly says, "Ready to solve mysteries and do good deeds and fight bad guys . . . Didn't she tell you? This what we do. We help keep the city safe. Girls, we're absolutely the snake's pajamas." The lingo and presence of airships—not to mention lessons in the Charleston—loosely suggest a 1920s setting, but the Institute's imaginative details are what steal the show. Secret entrances, hidden rooms, a rooftop ropes course, disguises, a multi-tool made to look like a doll—it's a spy fan's dream. Maggie enters the Institute with two other girls, Nell and Sophie, none of whom can quite wrap their mind around their change in circumstance, but they quickly come around when the first-years are given a possible kidnapping to investigate. As they gain skills and confidence, they also find belonging and madcap adventure. Jeepers, it's a thrill! —*Julia Smith*

Montgomery Bonbon: Mystery at the Manor.

By Alasdair Beckett-King. Illus. by Claire Powell.

June 2025. 288p. Candlewick, \$18.99 (9781536241686). Gr. 3-6.

Detective Montgomery Bonbon, he of magnificent mustache and unplaceable foreign accent, is back on the case! Ten-year-old Bonnie Montgomery's alter ego, the extraordinary Bonbon, has been tasked with a delicate delivery to Adderstone Manor, home of the notorious crook Fergus Croke. The aging Croke is looking to leave his fortune to one of his three pleasingly unprincipled protégés, and he's designed a devilish contest to identify the top talent. A sneaky safecracker, an explosives ingenue, and a clever conjurer will seemingly stop at nothing to nab the prize; but when Croke croaks under suspicious circumstances, it's left to Bonbon to determine

which competitor was actually willing to go to such dastardly lengths. Established Bonbon buffs will welcome another excellent installment, while newcomers will quickly find their footing in the terrifically funny, fast-paced setting. Amusing illustrations have a scribbled Quentin Blake quality that suits the silly story perfectly, and the utilization of dark page backgrounds during scenes set at night or underground is inspired. Another marvelous, pun-packed mystery with enormous appeal. —*Emily Graham*

Opal Watson: Private Eye.

By Brittany J. Thurman.

2025. 224p. HarperCollins/Storytide, \$18.99

(9780063326491). Gr. 3-5.

A popular Pinna podcast gets the novel treatment in this first book in a new series for middle-grade readers. After spending the summer with her grandmother in Louisiana, Opal Watson is back home and already has a case. Her friend Madison is hearing noise in her apartment that may or may not have to do with the renovations her building is undergoing in an effort to keep it open. What seems like it may be an open-and-shut case soon turns into a mystery of historic proportions. Madison and Opal's cousin, Frank, are fun characters who add humor and excitement to the story. Opal has retinitis pigmentosa, a degenerative eye disease, and readers will get to experience some of the difficulties and training she does to help with her vision. Fans of the podcast and readers new to Opal's world won't want to miss her newest case, and they'll be eagerly awaiting the next book in the series. —*Ashley Leffel*

The Shadow of the World-Famous Nine.

By Ben Guterson. Illus. by Kristina Kister.

May 2025. 416p. Little, Brown/Christy Ottaviano, \$17.99

(9780316484749). Gr. 3-6.

Only two weeks have passed since Zander arrived at his grandmother's world-famous department store, the Nine, but he has already packed in plenty of adventure. Zander and friends quickly solved the mystery of a missing mandala that magically protects the long-standing store, and he's looking forward to quieter explorations of the Nine, from ice-cream parlors and magic shops to the rooftop Ferris wheel. But it quickly becomes clear that the store's resident malevolent spirit, Darkbloom, wasn't defeated, only briefly bested, and he's back to destroy the Nine for good. Zander will once again have to decode cryptic clues and face his deepest fears if the Nine is to have any hope of surviving Darkbloom's sinister schemes. The suspenseful sequel is another feast for passionate puzzlers who enjoy a side of solvable brainteasers alongside a compelling story. Fans of the first installment will delight in delving deeper into the Darkbloom lore and family history, and the decadent department-store setting once again nearly steals the show in its endless variety. Another riveting visit to the most eccentric of emporiums. —*Emily Graham*

★ **Smoke & Mirrors.** By Rosalyn Ransaw.

June 2025. 288p. Abrams/Amulet, \$18.99 (9781419770135). Gr. 3-6.

Andy is sorry. Sorry that his aunt has to put up with him all summer. Sorry that his dad is in jail and too embarrassed to talk to him about it. Sorry that Mr. Gilbert's barn burned down, even though he didn't do it. Everyone's all too willing to believe that Andy, the town's only Black kid, is responsible, though. Now, as punishment, he has to spend the summer helping Mr. Gilbert restore an old home

that's linked to a decades-old mystery. The former owner of the home was the Red Nave, a master magician who vanished after a murder occurred at his show. Mr. Gilbert has long been obsessed with the tale, so Andy strikes a bargain with the old man: if he can discover the Red Nave's identity and the truth about that night, Andy can stop working on the house. Andy is eager to get his summer back, but he's also interested in potentially proving the Red Nave's innocence—and, by extension, Andy's and his father's. Debut author Ransaw has built a mystery that is as satisfying to adults as it will be to middle-school readers. Her message of self-advocacy is particularly empowering, and readers will feel gratified by Andy's emergence as a stronger, more confident kid. A worthwhile read for any mystery fan or anyone in need of a little magic. —*Joel Shoemaker*

Their Just Desserts.

By Tracy Badua and Alechia Dow.

May 2025. 352p. HarperCollins/Quill Tree, \$18.99

(9780063254633). Gr. 3-6.

In Badua and Dow's sequel to *The Cookie Crumbles* (2024), eighth-graders Laila and Lucy are back to solve another mystery. Between Laila's blossoming romance with Micah and Lucy's demanding internship with renowned journalist Ariella Wilborn, the two have been distant. But when their friend Jaden's dad is accused of stealing diamonds from a mansion serving as the set for *The Holly Jolly Baking Show*, Laila and Lucy are on the case. The girls are roped into joining the baking competition, but their roles are inadvertently reversed: Lucy becomes a junior chetestant and Laila tests her journalism skills by serving as a host. Dodgy castmates, overwhelmed crew members, and intrusive mentors provide a hefty list of suspects. The high-pressure investigation and friendship tribulations are explored through chapters and journal entries from both girls. The production of a reality-television show provides a tantalizing setting for young readers, and the plot explores pertinent topics such as the utilization of deepfake AI. Delicious baking and sneaky thieves prove a perfect pairing in this cozy offering. —*Kristina Roderick*

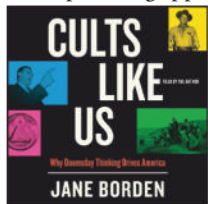
Adult Audio

★ **Cults like Us: Why Doomsday Thinking Drives America.**

By Jane Borden. Read by the author.

2025. 11hr. Simon & Schuster Audio, DD (9781797188430).

From the earliest Pilgrims to the latest presidential election, cult-like ideologies have played an unexpected role in shaping American history. Borden's dissection of the topic is a gripping and immersive listen made even more compelling by her own narration. She delivers a raw and authentic performance as both author and narrator, bringing depth and emotional weight to this historical examination of how apocalyptic beliefs have altered American culture. The book delves into the evolution of American theology and suggests that doomsday ideology, rooted in Puritan beliefs, has become ingrained in the nation's identity. Each cult presented comes with a captivating account of its origins, beliefs, and impact, immersing readers in each unique story. Initially, the broader connection to the book's central theme—the widespread influence of cult mentality—may not be obvious. However, as the narrative progresses, the pieces gradually come together, exposing the profound ways these groups have influenced the nation, at times even intersecting with the government. Readers who appreciate in-depth exploration



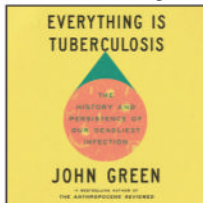
tions of how cult-like ideologies subtly and unexpectedly influence society will find this book especially compelling. —*Shellie Zeigler*

★ **Everything Is Tuberculosis: The History and Persistence of Our Deadliest Infection.**

By John Green. Read by the author.

2025. 5.5hr. Books on Tape, DD (9798217082407).

Tuberculosis (TB), historically known as consumption, is the world's oldest contagious disease according to Guinness World Records.



Although there has been a cure for years, millions still die from it. Green, known widely as a YouTuber and successful YA novelist, uses his sensitive insights and narrative talents to tell the story of tuberculosis. Green begins with the history of the disease, explaining early theories, medical breakthroughs, and stereotypical views about the afflicted. Woven into the details is the story of Henry, a young man in Sierra Leone who is fighting tuberculosis. Henry has been in the hospital for more than three years, gradually wasting away as he waits for the right treatment. What Green does so well is make his readers and listeners really care about Henry and the millions of others in the world who are unable to access these proven cures. Green reads with an earnestness and warmth that touch listeners' hearts. He shares his own struggles and views the TB patients with sympathetic understanding. Although filled with facts and statistics, this

program moves listeners by profiling real people who are being excluded from effective cures because of lack of funding and neglect. Green urges listeners to contemplate a world where we can make a difference in the lives of millions of people and hopefully eradicate this disease. —*Candace Smith*

YA: *Green has a loyal YA following, and Henry's story will add appeal. CS.*

★ **A House for Miss Pauline.**

By Diana McCaulay. Read by Sasha Frost.

2025. 10hr. Hachette Audio, DD (9781668646212).

A newbie she may be to audiobooks, but British actor Frost proves wondrous in voicing the titular Miss Pauline, now 99, who “knows she will die before her hundredth birthday, just over a month away.” Frost effortlessly shifts between standard English and the rhythmic patois that flows—shouts, insistences, admonishments, cajoling, and curses—from Miss Pauline as she navigates Jamaica's colonial legacy, familial challenges, and natural disasters. She survived



sexual abuse as a young girl, educated herself with stolen books, and grew fiercely into womanhood. She had one true love who died too young. She raised two children who have since abandoned the island. Alone, she still lives in Mason Hall, in the stone house she built from the ruins of a nearby plantation where her ancestors were enslaved. Once upon a time, now decades past, a white American stranger arrived claiming her land was rightfully his, leaving her paper proof of ownership before he seemingly, mysteriously disappeared. As she recognizes her imminent ending, she struggles to make peace with her past, summoning her estranged granddaughter from New York to explain the legacy of the land. Enlisting local teen Lamont for ongoing technical and mobile assistance leads Miss Pauline to a transplanted American woman with whom she'll share mutually shocking revelations. With empathic gravitas, Frost bears expert witness to a century of complex history and unforeseen human connection. —*Terry Hong*

Isola.

By Allegra Goodman. Read by Fiona Hardingham.

2025. 13hr. Books on Tape, DD (9780593946497).

In this story of a 16th-century castaway, the listener follows the vagarious adventures of Marguerite de la Rocque, a French noblewoman marooned on a nameless island off the coast of Canada. With ample space for imagination (which both the author and the narrator enjoy), the robinsonade—fascinating to its contemporaries—comes together from diverse historical accounts. Hardingham is a strategic, patient, and interestingly ageless reader, waiting for her chance to breathe energy into the inconsequential existence of the intimidated heroine. The interpretation of

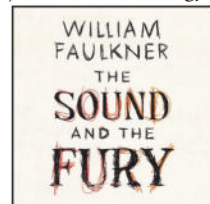
Classics Corner

Classics Corner highlights new recordings of classic titles.

★ **The Sound and the Fury.**
By William Faulkner. Read by a full cast.

2025. 9.5hr. Blackstone, DD (9798212633314).

In 1929, with the publication of Faulkner's saga of a crumbling aristocratic family, modernism hit American literature with inner monologues, stream of consciousness, and jumbled chronology. Four different voices and their unique perspectives await the listener. Shaun Taylor-Corbett, reading Benjy, is the crucial voice, the invitation. There is a gentle quiver to his tone, emphasizing the music of Benjy's tale, with metaphorical messages reappearing refrain-like. Quentin's section, read by Edoardo Ballerini, contains elements of a stage monologue with well-arched phrasing, where the narration moves effortlessly between impersonations of other characters, self-observation, and a deeply tormented, passionate reflection on values and honor. Justin's monologue, narrated by



Bronson Pinchot, introduces society at large, and his is the dark voice of prejudice and manipulation. Without contradicting the character, Justin is enriched by subtle reading strategies, his bitter anger burning so deep that it makes the character appear almost cold. Dilsey's section, written in third person, is read by the luminous Robin Miles with loving attention to the beautiful character. She is the saving grace of the family, and it is the description of her world which finally brings the liberating outside view to the listener. An exquisite, heartfelt interpretation of one of the best American novels of the 20th century. Who said this text was unnavigable? —*Milena Durek*

the rough island adventure stands out, with Hardingham enlivening the character of the abused young person with raw emotions and an awareness of her freedoms in the battle against merciless elements. Can Marguerite's unforeseen return to civilization end in a triumph? Will she be reconciled, having claimed her rightful place in the world? As a bonus, at the book's end, the author describes her work and inspiration. —*Milena Durek*

Penitence.

By Kristin Koval. Read by Thérèse Plummer.

2025. 12hr. Macmillan Audio, DD (9781250384225).

Koval's debut has found a fitting voice in Plummer, whose subtle characterizations enhance the details of this well-crafted family drama and bring focus to its complex characters. When 13-year-old Nora Sheehan shoots her brother in cold blood, the complicated history of two families in a small skiing town is again brought to the surface. Forced to accept legal support from the family of mother Angie Sheehan's ex, the Sheehans reel with the loss of one child, the crimes of another, and a long-held secret that could destroy their marriage. Plummer's performance highlights the humanity at the center of this story despite its heavy subject matter. Plummer takes cues from the natural cadence of Koval's writing, focusing on bringing the characters and story to life rather than creating suspense or drama. While still a gripping and compelling listen, this narrative treatment leans into literary fiction and away from the thriller genre. A deeply engrossing listen that will have you reflecting on guilt and forgiveness. —*Fiona Watson*

Trespassers at the Golden Gate: A True Account of Love, Murder, and Madness in Gilded-Age San Francisco.

By Gary Krist. Read by Rob Shapiro.

2025. 11.5hr. Books on Tape, DD (9798217019847).

Krist draws readers into one of America's landmark true crime stories: the 1870 murder of eminent lawyer and family man A. P. Crittenden by his lover, Laura Fair, on a San Francisco-bound ferry. The vibrancy of newspaper journalism helped spread nationwide debate: was Fair a cold-blooded murderer or a mentally impaired victim? While the book centers on Fair and the Crittenden family, Krist enriches the narrative by exploring the broader context of 19th-century America. Drawing from primary sources, Shapiro narrates a journey from the Gold Rush of 1849 to Fair's 1871 trial, touching on key issues of the time, including immigration, race relations, women's suffrage, abolition, prostitution, mental health, and journalism. Krist also explores the rapidly developing city of San Francisco, revealing its significant influence on the Gilded Age and American culture, with nods to figures such as Mark Twain and Susan B. Anthony. Shapiro's pacing and the frequent inclusion of dialogue help balance the book's historical gravity. However, analytical readers seeking a deeper dive may miss the map, notes, and bibliography in the print version. —*Abby McCabe*

Youth Audio

Farmer Eva's Green Garden Life.

By Jacqueline Briggs Martin. Read by Eva Kaminsky and Eva Sommaripa.

2025. 30m. Live Oak, DD (9781430145622). Gr. 2–5.

A quiet picture book about an herb farmer becomes a symphony of natural sounds on audio. Eva Sommaripa's discovery of the joy of growing plants and sharing that joy with others is inspiring and encouraging; "try this!" is her frequent refrain. Throughout the tale of how Eva's farming efforts evolved from just growing herbs for her own table to providing flavorful components to many of Boston's restaurants, we hear the sounds of nature and work. The calls of different birds, the buzz of bees, the *scritch* of a spade turning the earth, and a squeaky wheelbarrow all bring the vibrant farm environment to the listener. The story ends with notes read by both Eva and the author, along with plenty of back matter sharing the unique qualities of female farmers, the importance of nurturing a garden microbiome, and different ways youngsters can start growing food and herbs themselves. A lovely contribution to Briggs Martin's *Food Heroes* series, many of which are also on audio from Live Oak Media. —*Heather Booth*

Interabled: True Stories about Love and Disability from Squirmy & Grubs and Other Interabled Couples.

By Shane Burcaw and Hannah Burcaw. Read by the authors and a full cast.

2025. 8.5hr. Macmillan Audio, DD (9781250366023). Gr. 9–12.

A humorous and uplifting exploration of interabled relationships—those where one or both partners are people with disabilities—is performed by a full cast. The authors, successful YouTubers and disability advocates in their own interabled marriage, share anecdotes and perspectives from their relationship, interspersed among narratives and Q&As with other interabled couples. Both authors narrate sections, bringing authenticity and charm to their experiences that explore ableism, sex, home ownership, infertility, and almost everything in between. Hannah's voice is soothing and grounded and creates a nice foil for Shane's uproarious interjections and entertaining sarcasm. Their performances are supplemented by actors who perform the interviews and Q&As with other couples, keeping each chapter feeling fresh. Hakim and Gavia share a particular chemistry of voices, making their joint chapters extra enchanting and really driving home the joy these couples share. *Interabled* is delightful, eye-opening, and often hilarious. Each of these qualities is enhanced by the audio performance. This will make a valuable addition to any memoir, young adult, or accessible audio collection. Though marketed as a YA title, it has strong crossover appeal for adult listeners. —*Fiona Watson*

Rebellion 1776.

By Laurie Halse Anderson. Read by Phoebe Strole.

2025. 10hr. Listening Library, DD (9780593915066). Gr. 5–9.

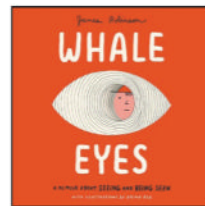
In the spring of 1776, thirteen-year-old Elspeth Culpepper, whose father has just disappeared, finds herself fighting to survive in a Boston torn apart by war and plagued by a deadly smallpox epidemic. As she navigates the chaos of the Revolution and the spread of disease, Elspeth takes on a job with a wealthy family, all while desperately searching for her father. Narrator Strole captures Elspeth's youthful, feisty, and sharp-witted nature with a captivating voice, perfectly reflecting her character's resilience. With her expert pacing and tone, Strole enhances the author's rich, character-driven story, highlighting the strength of a determined young girl caught in dangerous times and giving listeners a glimpse into early American politics and the importance of family. Hand to fans of Anderson's other historical novels like *Fever 1793* and the *Seeds of America* trilogy. —*Sharon Haupt*

Whale Eyes: A Memoir about Seeing and Being Seen.

By James Robinson. Read by the author.

2025. 3.5hr. Listening Library, DD (9789217018246). Gr. 5–8.

In this exquisitely crafted memoir, James Robinson invites the reader to experience growing up alongside him as he experiences strabismus, a visual disability. Robinson chronicles his struggles with vision and learning in early childhood and his desire to be wholly seen in adulthood. This need contributes to his successful career as a documentarian.



Though the entirety of this fascinating book is deeply empathic, perhaps the most poignant portion is the author's evocative exploration of his reading struggles. Palpable descriptions hold listeners captive, waiting for the clock to trudge toward the recess bell. Actions from well-meaning adults who didn't catch the disability and pushed him forward before he was ready feel like betrayals, and Sisyphus attempts to solve the problem through exercise, eye patches, and surgery cut deep. Gratification is swift once Robinson begins experimenting with filmmaking, turning his gaze outward and learning the art of storytelling and connection. Narrated by the author, the audiobook is both gentle and gripping, inviting you in and holding you there. The physical book is "not simply meant to be read, but twisted, turned, and experienced," using interactive experiments and illustrations to great effect (a PDF is included with the audiobook). Robinson deftly sets up this challenge by inviting friends to try the experiments in real time and by describing the illustrations, giving the listener the feeling of sitting knee-to-knee with him and experiencing the wonder, laughter, and the extraordinary joy that comes with being seen. —*Caitlin Savage*

Spotlight on Mysteries & Thrillers

Art from *Kills Well with Others*.

Adult Audio

All the Other Mothers Hate Me.

By Sarah Harman. Read by Georgina Sadler.

2025. 11hr. Books on Tape, DD (9798217016556).

Fame, stability, and even morality seem to elude former almost-famous girl-band reject Florence. At 31, so much is wrong: pretentious ex-husband, subpar flat, minimal employment, shoplifting as “political dissent.” Raising Dylan, now 10, mostly solo has been tough, but he’s her greatest joy, so she’ll begrudgingly endure the hateful mothers at their exclusive London school. And then Alfie—Dylan’s bully who Florence insists is “a little sh*t”—goes missing on a class trip. When she finds Alfie’s backpack under Dylan’s bed, Florence’s already flexible ethics go into hyperdrive, and she’ll do anything to keep Dylan safe. Debut novelist Harman, a London-based American (like Florence), is ideally matched with British American actor Sadler, who effortlessly shifts between geographies despite “how jarring an American accent can be at full strength.” Florence and Jenny, another new mom at the school, stand out for their U.S. origins, while the rest of Harman’s vast cast sport various degrees of clip and posh. Kidnapped children and buried bodies are, of course, never funny, but with Florence’s increasingly cringe-worthy antics, Sadler deftly works her audience into eye-rolling chuckles. —Terry Hong

Count My Lies.

By Sophie Stava. Read by a full cast.

2025. 11hr. Simon & Schuster Audio, DD (9781668121108).

Sloane is a liar. She started small: a half-truth here, a minor exaggeration there, all to make her sad life more exciting. When Sloane meets Jay Lockhart and his daughter Harper at the park, she can’t resist another lie. Sloane returns to the park every day, hoping to see Jay again. Instead, Sloane meets Jay’s wife Violet and the two begin a friendship. Violet is vibrant, well-dressed, and beautiful—everything Sloane wants to be. But is Violet’s life as wonderful as it seems? When Sloane accompanies the Lockharts on a family trip, she soon realizes she is not the only one hiding the truth. Three POVs are represented inside this debut thriller by Stava. Emily Tremaine is Sloane, tremulous and insecure, her timbre fitting the character’s need to be wanted. Devon Sorvari’s deep, grave approach brings the perfect edge and desperation to Violet. Jay’s POV is minimal, but seasoned audio listeners will immediately recognize the

smooth swagger of Andrew Eiden’s voice. As a collective, the narrators lead listeners through a cohesive and exhilarating turn of events. —Carmen Clark

Dead Men Wag No Tails.

By Sarah Fox. Read by Hallie Bee Bard.

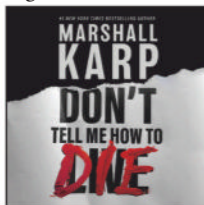
2025. 8hr. CD, \$31.49 (9781666679281).

Georgie Johansen moves from L.A. to the sleepy seaside town of Twilight Cove to help at her aunt’s animal sanctuary, just in time for the annual Dead Eye Days pirate celebration. But the small town is rocked by the murder of a town character who claims to have found a treasure map showing the existence of buried gold. Georgie and her friend Tessa use their sleuthing skills to find the killer and save the festival. Bard has a clear, eager voice that matches well with Georgie’s bright personality. Especially fun are the reader’s “canine comments” from Georgie’s two dogs, who possess special intuitive powers, and the pirate talking parrot. Most of the cast is female, but Bard does a good job distinguishing characters. Tessa and Georgie take their time eliminating suspects, and the result is not exactly a nail-biter. But for listeners who enjoy amateur sleuthing, a little romance, and a touch of the supernatural, this is just the ticket. —Candace Smith

**Don’t Tell Me How to Die.**

By Marshall Karp. Read by January LaVoy.

2025. 9.5hr. Blackstone, DD (9798874824457).



Maggie Dunn has already realized she’s dying after the perky phlebotomist shows up at the office. She’s had a fatal disease “hanging over [her] head for twenty-six years,” the same one that killed her mother decades ago. Now that her time is almost up, she’s got to plan for her beloved family’s future; she can’t risk a repeat of what almost happened to her widowed father, who narrowly escaped a serial criminal targeting mournful men. At 43, she’s “a fairly popular mayor and a rather well-liked human being.” On paper, that is. While searching for the next Mrs. Dunn, Maggie will need to admit why she’s “destined to spend eternity burning in hell for [her] sins.” While certain plot lines might cause an eyeroll (or 17) on the page—like the local manipulative harridan who suddenly develops a conscience and commits suicide in

deep regret—worry not, listeners, because effortlessly adaptable LaVoy is going to make you believe every last word. Her impressive range is fully, thoroughly engaging, inhabiting hopeful “women with casseroles” just as effortlessly as cheating first loves, hapless men, an erudite librarian, the town’s savviest drug dealer, devoted bonded sisters, and endless others. In his latest (rare) standalone, Karp (*NYPD Red*, the Lomax & Biggs series) expertly churns out jaw-dropping misleads and about-face reveals; LaVoy keeps perfect pace. —Terry Hong

Famous Last Words.

By Gillian McAllister. Read by Emilia Fox.

2025. 13hr. HarperAudio, DD (978006338456).

Cam can’t find husband Luke on an otherwise perfect June morning, meaning he won’t get to say goodbye to their daughter Polly before her preschool debut. Just as Cam’s leaving, she spots Luke’s note: “*If anything . . . It’s been so lovely with you both.*” She thinks, “How weird,” but gets on with Polly’s drop-off and her first day back at her literary agency after maternity leave. And “then everything happens all at once.” Breaking news reports “a man has taken three hostages in a warehouse in London.” By day’s end, one hostage is free, the other two dead, and Luke is gone; hostage negotiator Niall couldn’t have been more wrong. Seven years later, attempting closure, Cam tries to have Luke declared dead—but is he? In controlled British English, Fox entices listeners on an addictively twisty thrill ride, revealing McAllister’s hints (and red herrings) with impressive pacing. Cam and Niall each narrate individual chapters, suggesting two readers might have been the better choice; indeed, Fox’s distinctions are minimal, but McAllister’s intricate plotting will ensure satisfaction to the very end. —Terry Hong

The Forger’s Requiem.

By Bradford Morrow. Read by Christina Delaine.

2025. 10hr. HighBridge, DD (9781696618724).

When Henry Slader awakens to find he has been buried alive, he is pretty certain that he deserves his fate. Disoriented and struggling with memory loss, he claws himself out of the grave. Readers then learn that he is a master forger who has created fakes of rare and expensive manuscripts from around the world. He needs just one more job to fund his new life. The only problem is that doing so puts him back in the path of the very people who put him in the grave in the first place. Told from alternating perspectives, the story follows a complex web of deception, blackmail, and murder, keeping readers engaged until the end. Delaine expertly navigates the voices and timelines, creating a separate tone and mood for each so that listeners never doubt where they are, be it the present day, with the young, passionate artist Henry has drawn into his web; the memories and inner dialogue of the forger himself; or the expository narra-

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Now Hear This

Vikas Adam

by Heather Booth

It's always big news when a new narrator takes over a beloved audio series. Listeners of Tarquin Hall's Vish Puri mysteries have quite a treat in store with Vikas Adam now narrating for India's "most private detective" in *The Case of the Elusive Bombay Duck*. Adam spoke with *Booklist* about this new project.

Booth: *Taking on the narration of a beloved series must have been a challenge! How did you prepare for this role?*

Adam: It was definitely daunting because the absolutely brilliant Sam Dastor, for whom I have such great respect, established these characters. If I were to try to replicate what he had done, it would affect my connection with the words, so it was a matter of listening to what he had done, then trying to incorporate that with my particular energy, choices, and interpretation of the text.

Booth: *You do a lot of narrations for young listeners, but you're also a frequent narrator of significantly weighty titles for adults. Is there anything you've learned from performing youth narrations that you bring to adult titles, or vice versa?*

Adam: Just as each book has the energy and creative essence that the author has infused, I treat every book as its own individual piece. If I'm working on a piece for younger listeners, that means treating that story with the same reverence I would for, say, literary or classic fiction. No matter the genre, it's important to not speak down to your listener.

Booth: *What are your favorite stories to narrate? What really energizes you in your work?*

Adam: I gravitate towards pieces with enticing storytelling, clever storylines, and characters and relationships that allow me as an actor to dig in or challenge myself. But it also depends on where I'm at in the moment. Sometimes, a bubbly romcom with snappy writing is what I need as a palate cleanser if I've just come off a meditative nonfiction book that explored the darker recesses of our race. What's energizing to me is discovering a connection to an author's style that I didn't initially know upon previewing the book. Maybe they're flipping the script on what I was expecting from a typical story, or presenting the storytelling format differently. This can invigorate how I approach the translation of the piece to audio because I have to assume the listener is only going to experience it in its sonic format. That's when it can be a lot of fun.

Sample the range of fun Vikas Adam has as a narrator with some of these recent standout titles.

City of the Plague God. By Sarwat Chadda. 2021. 10.5hr. Listening Library, DD (9780593291160). Gr. 3-7.

Adam excels at character voices, and the listener never doubts who is speaking among the large cast, from the demon's singsong taunting to the love goddess' dulcet tones and the vengeful plague god's broken rumble. Adam gives human characters their due, too.

Like a Love Story. By Abdi Nazemian. 2019. 11hr. Harper, CD (9781982660314). Gr. 9-12.

Joined by Lauren Ambrose and Michael Crouch, Adam perfects the trio of narrators in this gorgeously affecting homage to young

love set against the AIDS crisis in New York. Narrating several roles, Adam showcases his versatility.

The Museum of Failures. By Thrity Umrigar. 2023. 12.5hr. Hachette Audio, DD (9781668632642).

With marvelous empathetic versatility, Adam convincingly embodies a range of characters from a preschooler to a septuagenarian. Remy returns to India to meet the pregnant teen whose baby he and his wife hope to adopt, unlocking a tumult of family secrets. Adam ably plays all sides as revelations unfold.

Quichotte. By Salman Rushdie. 2019. 16hr. Books on Tape, DD (9780593162644).

A vast cast diverse in age, gender, social standing, ethnicity, region, and accent. Who you gonna call? With remarkable agility, Adam makes us believe it all in this layered, convoluted narrative from a modern literary great.

Upon a Burning Throne. By Ashok K. Banker. 2019. Recorded Books, CD (9781980026952).

Frequently cast to characters in complex fantasy worlds, Adam is top notch in the *Burnt Empire* saga. He employs varying accents that truly showcase the Indian culture and storytelling traditions that inspired the epic fantasy saga.

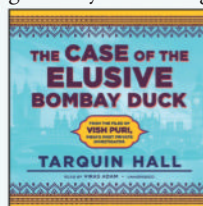


The Case of the Elusive Bombay Duck.

By Tarquin Hall. Read by Vikas Adam.

2025. 8hr. Blackstone, DD (9781094081687).

Vish Puri's groupies might be concerned that his original aural cipher, Sam Dastor, is missing after marvelously voicing the first five volumes. Worry not, fellow devotees: while Dastor will always be Puri's progenitor, Vikas Adam steps to the mic for a gloriously convincing sixth book. He seamlessly embodies the



beloved characters, proving utterly convincing as don't-compare-him-to-"that Sherlock Holmes fellow" Puri ("He was fiction, whereas I am fact") and his inimitable Mummy-ji, who remains Puri's best (bossy) secret weapon. At 59, Puri has reached the pinnacle of his profession; he's "about to be crowned the 2021

Private Detective of the Year by the International Federation of Private Detectives," considered the Nobel for worldwide investigators. Puri's dearest wife Rumpi insists the London awards ceremony will be the perfect opportunity for an absolutely-no-work-allowed break, even if Mummy-ji somehow manages to be their third wheel. Of course, crime never takes a vacation and Puri ends up partnering with Scotland Yard to catch the titular Bombay Duck, a runaway pharmaceutical executive whose pills kill. While staying with extended family in East Ham, Puri finds an unlikely partner in nephew Jags, whose 'innit'-laced, hardly-the-Queen's English occasionally requires translation. Adam effortlessly adjusts between ages, genders, (diverse) accents, countries, and even continents, reprising and bestowing personalities throughout. Adam undoubtedly deserves to remain on retainer as the Most Private Investigators Ltd.'s new voice of choice. —Terry Hong

Continued from p.114

tion that pulls the story toward its inevitable conclusion. This compelling novel, which incorporates elements of *Frankenstein*, Joyce, and Poe, is a thrilling listen for literary and gothic enthusiasts. —*Josie Snow*

The Girl from Greenwich Street: A Novel of Hamilton, Burr, and America's First Murder Trial.

By Lauren Willig. Read by Jane Oppenheimer.

2025. 12.5hr. HarperAudio, DD (9780063306141).

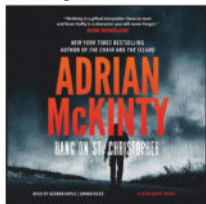
On December 22, 1799, 22-year-old Elma Sands left her married cousin Caty's boardinghouse to go "borrow a muff to wear to her wedding." Her murdered corpse was found in the Manhattan Well in early January. The prime suspect was co-lodger Levi Weeks, assumed to be Elma's suitor. Levi's two-day trial—March 31 and April 1, 1800—became the United States' first recorded murder trial. From a 100-page transcript, prolific Willig melds together a compelling, still unsolved mystery and a fascinating courtroom drama starring Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr (their notoriety made legend by Lin-Manuel Miranda's musical spectacle). Oppenheimer is a convincingly versatile cipher, embodying a significant cast of suspects, detractors, supporters: desperate Elma, exhausted Caty, longing Hope. Oppenheimer drops her register for men's characterizations, turning Burr gruff, Hamilton often doubtful; she's especially memorable as sly manipulator Croucher. The final hour includes "What Became of Them After?," with an extensive "Historical Note" poignantly considering, "Who was Elma Sands?" Willig's diligent research and vibrant imagination enable Oppenheimer to give voice to a young woman lost to "the tactics and techniques of the flamboyant lawyers." —*Terry Hong*

Hang On St. Christopher.

By Adrian McKinty. Read by Gerard Doyle.

2025. 10hr. Blackstone, DD (9781504780872).

McKinty delivers yet another gripping installment in the Detective Sean Duffy series. His signature blend of razor-sharp wit, gritty realism, and historical depth makes this title a must-listen for crime fiction fans. Set against the turbulent backdrop of 1980s Northern Ireland, the novel follows Duffy as he navigates corruption, danger, and his own weary cynicism. As always, McKinty's writing crackles with energy, seamlessly balancing dark humor with intense, edge-of-your-seat storytelling. The pacing is taut, the dialogue razor-sharp, and the atmosphere immersive, keeping listeners engaged from start to finish. Narrator Doyle, who has voiced the entire series, once again delivers a masterful performance. He



brings Duffy to life, precisely capturing his dry humor, intelligence, and world-weariness with just the right tone. Doyle's ability to differentiate characters and maintain authentic accents enhances the listening experience, making the setting and characters feel real. Longtime fans will appreciate how McKinty continues to evolve Duffy's character and expand his richly detailed world. For newcomers, this title is an excellent entry point, though starting with the very first of the series, *The Cold Cold Ground* (2012), provides the full scope. Readers who enjoy Brian McGilloway's *Ben Devlin* or *Lucy Black* series will likely be drawn to this. —*Shellie Zeigler*

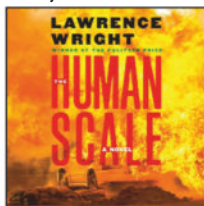


The Human Scale.

By Lawrence Wright. Read by Peter Ganim.

2025. 18.5hr. Books on Tape, DD (9798217074037).

Pulitzer-winning journalist Lawrence Wright (*The Looming Tower*, *Going Clear*, *The Plague Year*) has never shied away from the day's most contentious issues, or from examining radicalism and religious fundamentalism. Here, Wright turns to fiction to encapsulate his observations from reporting on the last few years of Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The novel opens on a scene of explosive violence in which protagonist Tony Malik, an Arab American FBI agent, is seriously hurt. After a long and arduous recovery, Malik pursues new connections with his father's family in Hebron in the West Bank, where he joins with Israeli policeman Yossi to investigate the murder of an Israeli police chief. Wright's characters endure many heartbreaking facets of uneasy Israeli-Palestinian coexistence that culminates in the latest open conflict as militants bay for retributive violence and genocide, innocents yearn for a peaceful life, and listeners encounter corrupt institutions, zealous religious authorities, and complicated family loyalties. The audiobook is read by Ganim, a Slavic Arab American stage and screen actor whose resonant baritone voice is an easy fit for Malik—and who ably handles both Hebrew and Palestinian Arabic dialects. Strongly recommend to thriller readers, or to those interested in exploring the conflict through a fictionalized, on-the-ground perspective that centers the humanity of those most affected. —*Andrew Cook*



The Inheritance.

By Trisha Sakhlecha. Read by a full cast.

2025. 11hr. Books on Tape, DD (9780593944202).

On a remote Scottish island with a deadly history, the Agarwal family reunites for an announcement by the family patriarch, Raj, on how the family's financial assets will be divided and who will be named his successor. The nonlinear locked-room plot focuses on the intricate family dynamics, secrets, betrayals, and multilayered traumas (including abuse

and the death of a child) of the Agarwal clan. The crisp narration and distinctly voiced characters add a resonant intensity to the leisurely paced plot. The emotional portrayal of the flawed cast of characters enhances the moody setting. The intensity of the psychological suspense ramps up in the last few chapters, excellently highlighted by the change in narrative tone. The sharp twist in the epilogue will keep listeners contemplating the nature of familial bonds long after the story ends. This is a great choice for fans of Shari Lapena, Lucy Foley, Lisa Jewell, and Alafair Burke. —*Shoshana Frank*

Killer Potential.

By Hannah Deitch. Read by Kristen Sieh and Daru Oda.

2025. 9.5hr. HarperAudio, DD (9780063356535).

Evie Gordon is a highly educated, slightly depressed, very cynical young woman tutoring rich kids for the SAT in L.A.'s priciest neighborhoods. One Sunday afternoon she shows up to tutor Serena Victor, a troubled young girl with distant, wildly wealthy parents, and instead finds a bloodbath. In her panic and disbelief, Evie implicates herself while finding a bound, wild-looking woman tied up under the main staircase. Together, the two strangers flee across the country and Evie learns what lines she is willing to cross to protect herself and her new, strange partner in crime. This twisty novel races back and forth across North America as our young fugitives are pursued by police and a crazed media that can't get enough of the "lady killers." It's very well performed by narrators Kristen Sieh and Daru Oda, who are especially notable in the final third of the book, where the story unfolds and the wild truth comes to light of what happened in that house. Recommended for thriller and mystery readers, *Killer Potential* has a lot to offer true crime fans with its ripped-from-the-headlines feel. Listen to this book! —*Jennifer Kinnavy*

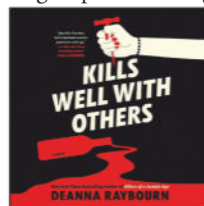


Kills Well with Others.

By Deanna Raybourn. Read by Jane Oppenheimer and Christina Delaine.

2025. 10.5hr. Books on Tape, DD (9798217015894).

"To all of you who took these killers to your hearts and wanted to see them kill again," Raybourn's dedication greets. Killing might be a mortal sin—what does that say about us groupies encouraging it?—but welcoming these Killers of a Certain Age for another glorious installment is underscored with gleeful joy at the return of narrators Jane Oppenheimer and Christina Delaine. The former again commands the heart-thumping present, while the latter takes to lower registers to cipher the multi-layered past, providing decades of provenance for this latest mission. Billie, Helen, Natalie, and Mary



Alice are rather miffed when they reunite at Dulles Airport to pile into a cheap rental car, only to be booked into double rooms at a Best Western (with a Groupon discount!). They've been called in for an "off the books" assignment: finish a 30-year-old job. Their target is the son of an evil Bulgarian assassin determined to avenge his father's untimely death. But eliminating him, of course, leads the sexagenarian quartet through a global chase for a demented aunt, a dead sister, an opera singer, and eventually, mythic stolen art. Once again enhancing Raybourn's meticulous plotting, Oppenheimer and Delaine reconfirm their dynamic duo-ism, seamlessly comfortable with vast casts, multiple accents, and various languages. The listener's immediate gratitude for familiarity, accuracy, and delight remains palpable throughout. —*Terry Hong*



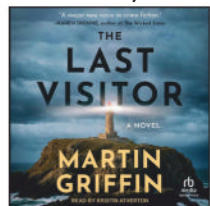
The Last Visitor.

By Martin Griffin. Read by Kristin

Atherton.

2025. 8.5hr. Tantor, DD (9798331925147).

Esteemed yet elusive filmmaker Tess Macfarlane is hastily hired by the Seawild conservation group to create a documentary featuring endangered seal populations. Tess and a team of three researchers embark on a rather ominous journey to Navigaceo, a deserted island far off the coast of Portugal with ruthless environmental conditions. Allegedly, the island hasn't been visited in over half a century, but it doesn't take long before



Tess' camera captures a recently deceased body clad in Seawild gear—far from the breathtaking wildlife she was hired to film. Tess' growing obsession with investigating her fellow travelers mirrors the island's atmosphere, abounding with overwhelming winds and fog. Atherton masterfully distinguishes each of the four main characters, applying Spanish and European accents and pronunciations to create an even more immersive experience. Tess' traumatic past is interspersed throughout the central narrative, allowing us to learn more about the origins of her gritty personality—the one factor that might just give her a chance of making it out of Navigaceo alive. Atherton's cadence and tone perfectly convey moments of fear, leaving listeners anxiously alert alongside Tess, while carefully withholding auditory details until just the right moment. Full of rewarding suspense, *The Last Visitor* is that terrifying listen you somehow never want to end. —*Abby McCabe*

The Memory Ward.

By Jon Basso. Read by a full cast.

2025. 8.5hr. Blackstone, DD (9798212913928).

Life is too perfect in Bethlam, NV. When local mail carrier Hank Davies finds that he has been delivering blank letters, he starts to

Top 10 Mysteries & Thrillers on Audio

Tense thrillers continue to reign in this year's audio Top 10, but we see cozy mysteries reemerging as a softer complement, resulting in a satisfying range of narrations. —*Heather Booth*

All This and More. By Peng Shepherd. Read by Helen Laser. 2024. 15.5hr. HarperAudio, DD (9780063279001).

Jump around among chapters to hear Laser, a remarkable cipher, deftly navigate Marsh (a discontented divorcée with a cheating ex, a distant teen, and an unsatisfying paralegal career) through various iterations of her stint on a reality-TV show.

Butter. By Asako Yuzuki. Tr. by Polly Barton. Read by Hanako Footman. 2024. 17hr. HarperAudio, DD (9780063236431).

British Japanese actor Footman's facility with Japanese enhances Yuzuki's mystery, conflating a murder with the 2011 butter shortage.

The Case of the Elusive Bombay Duck. By Tarquin Hall. Read by Vikas Adam. 2025. 8hr. Blackstone, DD (9781094081687).

Adam takes over from the previous series narrator with panache as he ably narrates the exploits of "India's most private detective" with a range of intonations and accents.

Don't Tell Me How to Die. By Marshall Karp. Read by January LaVoy. 2025. 9.5hr. Blackstone, DD (9798874824457).

The always-striking LaVoy is absolutely on point here as a mayor facing her own mortality while questions swirl around her. This one-woman show has the feel of a full cast thanks to LaVoy's virtuosic narration.

Finlay Donovan Rolls the Dice. By Elle Cosimano. Read by Angela Dawe. 2024. 9hr. Macmillan Audio, DD, \$19.99 (9781250332134).

The fantastic Dawe returns as the narrator, shining with her incredible ability to create uniquely dynamic voices for every character in this clever, fun, action-filled, fan-favorite series.

Gaslight. By Miles Joris-Peyrafitte and Sara Shepard. Read by Julia Atwood. 2024. 11.5hr. Blackstone, DD (9798212188920).

In this timely, tense thriller based on a podcast that explores the inner workings of cults and the fragility of friendship and marriage, Atwood's storytelling flows seamlessly between past incidents and present consequences and will appeal to podcast fans.

A Killing Cold. By Kate Alice Marshall. Read by Karissa Vacker. 2025. 10hr. Macmillan Audio, DD (9781250381316).

Ominous text messages warn Theo away from her fiancé on an eerie private mountain. Vacker's soothing voice hooks listeners as Theo tries to unravel her cloudy past.

The Last Visitor. By Martin Griffin. Read by Kristin Atherton. 2025. 8.5hr. Tantor, DD (9798331925147).

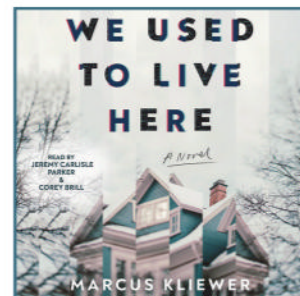
The creepy, deserted-island vibe and ominous tone of Griffin's second thriller create the perfect vehicle for Atherton to showcase her taut and tremulous English-accented narration and send shivers down the spine.

The Princess of Las Vegas. By Chris Bohjalian. Read by Saskia Maarleveld and Grace Experience. 2024. 11.5hr. Books on Tape, DD (9780593821213).

Princess Diana is back, and in Las Vegas! The plot is loud, crowded, and delightful. Maarleveld perfects the regal tone required for Di's impersonator, and Experience (Bohjalian's daughter) delights.

We Used to Live Here. By Marcus Kliewer. Read by Jeremy Carlisle Parker and Corey Brill. 2024. 10hr. Simon & Schuster Audio, DD (9781797181288).

"Once you let them in . . . they'll never leave." With thrillingly ominous pacing, Parker expertly commands the characters' emotions as the horror multiplies, electrifyingly balanced by Brill's control.



question what is really going on. The answer is terrifying and beyond belief. Bronson Pinchot reads the majority of the work, with a few chapters from two female perspectives read by Dawn Harvey and Janina Edwards. From the first sentence, Pinchot sets the unsettling tone of this work, deftly using tone and pace to convey an eerie sense that one can feel under the skin. The 1980's sitcom veteran also excels in the use of accents. From immaculately reflecting a woman doing a fake Southern accent to the East Coast accent of the doctor, characters are defined, unique, and memorable. The choice of multiple narrators elevates the impact of the narrative as all three are excellent matches for their roles. *Twilight Zone* fans and those who enjoy the intersection of thriller and horror will be very glad they picked up this audio. —Lesley Crysler

The Naming of the Birds.

By Paraic O'Donnell. Read by Charles Armstrong.

2025. 10hr. HighBridge, DD (9781696607902).

A mystery set in London and rural England of the Victorian era, featuring the time's language and spirit along with elements of a more light-hearted, zesty approach. A pinch of humor provides a counterbalance to the grim mysteries of the rampage of a serial murderer disclosing hidden sins. Armstrong takes on a complex, multilayered task with flair and the highest standards of reading. Every character is granted their personal voice and vernacular, with transitions so smooth the listener forgets that the inhabitants of the book are brought to life by a single reader. Inspector Henry Cutter hides behind layers of arrogance so scathing as to provoke smiles, and Metropolitan Police sergeant Bliss seems much too innocent for the rough world of crime investigation. The detective trio would not be complete without Octavia Hillingdon, a ferret of a journalist with connections and a formidable ally. Crime and evil at their worst; storytelling and reading at their best. —Milena Durek

A Proposal to Die For.

By Molly Harper. Read by Amanda Ronconi.

2025. 12hr. Books on Tape, DD (9798217063857).

Jessamine Bricker has made a career of creating perfect marriage proposals. When wealthy tycoon Trenton's proposal doesn't meet Jess's former classmate Diana's standards, she demands that he hire Jess to help him redo the proposal. After accepting the job, Jess spends a week at an exclusive spa/resort with Diana, Diana's cousin, and a catty wedding planner for a "pre-wedding planning retreat" to get to know Diana better so she can plan the perfect proposal for Trenton. Stuck rooming with mean-girl Diana and party, Jess thinks things can't get any worse until the bodies start dropping. Ronconi, a 2020 Audie Award Nominee, skillfully narrates this humorous and entertaining mystery/romance. Her distinct

performances of the quirky cast of characters, with skilled delivery, pacing, and lively performance, keep the listener engrossed in this work's humor, charm, and romance. Give this to readers who enjoy funny, upbeat mysteries with a touch of romance such as Sutantos' *Dial A for Aunties* (2021), Manansala's *Arsenic and Adobo* (2021), or novels by Janet Evanovich and Meg Cabot. —Melissa Wheelock

Remote: The Six.

By Eric Rickstad. Read by Ari Fliakos.

2025. 8.5hr. Blackstone, DD (9781094000497).

In this first entry in thriller author Eric Rickstad's *Remote* series, beleaguered FBI Special Agent Lukas Stark is stymied by his inability to catch the Tableau Killer after 18 months. When paired with the enigmatic Gilles Garnier, a "remote viewer" who can see people and events from afar in real time, Stark is skeptical of the man's abilities until Garnier accurately describes the Tableau Killer's newest crime scene. As they race to stop the killer before he strikes again, the pair uncovers a sinister conspiracy that changes everything. Fliakos' expert narration captures the characters' contrasting temperaments; his Stark is gruff and impatient, while his Garnier is harried and exhausted, pushed to his limits by his abilities. Brief interludes from Fliakos as the Tableau Killer add menace and help propel the suspenseful plot forward. Fliakos' narrative talents and Rickstad's gasp-inducing cliffhanger ending will have listeners eager for the next installment, *The Five*, which releases in July. —Kaitlin Conner

Romancing the Gravestone.

By Gena Showalter and Jill Monroe. Read by Kelli Tager.

2025. 6hr. Dreamscape, DD (9781666694109).

Jane Ladling, the quirky sole keeper of an old graveyard in Aurelian Hills, Georgia, is making her morning rounds when she notices an open casket holding more than one body. After calling the police, Jane identifies the newly deceased body as the local doctor. When the local police call the Georgia Bureau of Homicide, Jane is introduced to the very attractive Special Agent Conrad Ryan, who may or may not think Jane is capable of murder. The only way to prove her innocence is to find the real killer. Tager makes the most of Jane's quirkiness in this new narration of the 2021 title. As Jane is sleuthing, Tager brings on the drama by over-emphasizing Jane's thoughts. When Jane is nervous, Tager quickens her pace to near babbling. When Jane concocts a plan to suss out the killer in a midnight tour of the cemetery, and it seems that she really does not know what she is doing, she seemingly solves the mystery. This funny, romantic mystery is high on humor and low-key on romance. Tager saves the day. —Sharon Hryciwicz

Serial Killer Support Group.

By Saratoga Schaefer. Read by Abby Craden and Timothy Andrés Pabon.

2025. 9hr. Spotify Audiobooks, DD (9798882436512).

Cyra's sister is dead, and through an inside source, Cyra discovers that she was probably murdered at the hands of a serial killer. When her source also shares information about a local in-person support group for serial killers, she vows to discover the killer's identity on her own by posing as a serial killer herself and joining the all-male group. Husky-voiced Craden narrates Cyra's third-person perspective, beginning with an appropriately understated tone to match Cyra's calloused emotional state. As the story intensifies, Craden seamlessly maneuvers between Cyra—whose senses are heightened—and other distinctly voiced characters. Pabon enhances the experience by narrating the chapters focused on the serial killers, also giving each character a unique voice and emotional connection appropriate to their individual histories and situations. Despite this, readers may find it hard to keep track of the killers via their real and code names. Unlike other recent horror genre books about serial killers, this story falls firmly in the thrillers and suspense genre and contains little gore. —Suzanne Temple

Such a Good Mom.

By Julia Spiro. Read by Abigail Reno.

2025. 10.5hr. Macmillan Audio, DD (9781250385116).

Narrator Abigail Reno fully embodies struggling new mom Brynn Nelson in this character-driven domestic thriller set in Martha's Vineyard. Overwhelmed by her newborn baby Lucas and suffering from postpartum depression, romance author Brynn has trouble sleeping and focusing. Much of the story is heavily focused on Brynn's experience adjusting to motherhood—in particular, her exhaustion and her loneliness. Reno expressively captures her exasperation and stress, which the story emphasizes through repetition. To make matters worse, Brynn's husband Ross is accused of murder after a young local woman named Cecilia is found dead on the island. He insists he is innocent and tells Brynn to look for "the orange sun" as he is led off to jail. With the story's focus mainly on Brynn and the challenges of new motherhood, the mystery thriller aspect of the book is underdeveloped and underwhelming. For those looking for a quick listen light on mystery, this audio shines in its sympathetic and honest characterization of a new mom going through the "baby blues." —Van McGary

The Undoing of Violet Claybourne.

By Emily Critchley. Read by Nathalie Buscombe.

2025. 12hr. Recorded Books, DD (9798895940983).

Fans of historical novels will enjoy this march through time, as this story covers the lifetimes of the main characters. Much of the story is narrated by one of the major players, Gillian, who finds herself with a fascinating new room-

mate at boarding school, Violet Claybourne. An only child, Gilly becomes enamored with Violet's family. When invited to spend the holidays at the Claybourne estate, she eagerly accepts. The holiday becomes filled with fear and anxiety, rather than fun and folly, due to an unfortunate accident that haunts all the participants for the remainder of their lives. As the story unfolds, multiple mysteries are divulged, contributing to the complexity of the tale. Critchley skillfully weaves the many surprise twists and turns, keeping listeners on their toes as they track each situation. Buscombe's lilting brogue and varying voices make following each character easier as she expertly performs this epistle. —*Ardith Eyring*

Watching Over You.

By Simon Delaney. Read by the author.

2025. 10.5hr. Highbridge, DD (9781696617925).

Irish actor Delaney's debut novel spans decades tracking Jewish artwork stolen in Paris during WWII. While the novel primarily focuses on modern-day brothers Michel and Antoine, owners of a struggling London restaurant, it jumps decades to the 1940s, '60s, and '80s to track the progress of the artwork in question and the stories of other characters. When the brothers are invited by a billionaire media company owner to film a reality cooking show throughout France, revitalizing their business just when they most need it, things may be too good to be true. Author Delaney also narrates the story and employs his genuine Irish accent throughout. While the characters in the book are English, French, or German, we hear them all through Delaney's soothing Irish lilt, which works fine. Characters are recognizable and the story flows well. Read to find out how these disparate pieces come together to resolve this decades-old art theft. —*Matt Matkowski*

Within the Circle.

By Arne Dahl. Read by Ann Richardson.

2025. 13hr. Dreamscape, DD (9781666683288).

In this mystery novel, written in the best contemporary tradition of a Scandinavian whodunit, a series of bombings in the heart of Stockholm—with escalating follow-ups cryptically announced to the local police—throws a veil of mystery over alliances within the police force itself. Richardson narrates with a fine sense of pacing and cool distance, ensuring that her interpretations do not mislead the listener or give away the upcoming character roles in the carefully constructed plot full of finely timed surprises. Richardson's tone is refreshingly neutral, offering ample thinking space to the listener and amplifying the author's piquant invitations to guffaw heartily at the antics of the police. Richardson's accuracy in pronouncing Swedish person and place names makes a welcome cultural statement, inviting the listener to draw comparisons to the police work in their country of origin. This story about eco-terrorism and the human condition is taken from our own worry lines. —*Milena Durek*

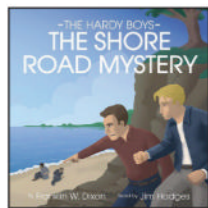
Classics Corner

Classics Corner highlights
new recordings of classic titles.

The Shore Road Mystery.

By Franklin W. Dixon. Read by Hayden Bishop.

2025. 4hr. Dreamscape, DD (9781666698428). Gr. 3–6.



Uh-oh. Bayport is experiencing a rash of car thefts! As cars disappear from the popular Shore Road area, the police scramble unsuccessfully to find the thieves. Luckily, Bayport is the home of the intrepid Hardy Boys, brothers Frank and Joe. When the authorities focus suspicion on their classmate and his father, our young sleuths make it their business to track down the real culprits, leading to some heart-thumping situations. Bishop delivers a balanced performance using good character differentiation, retaining an old-fashioned quality while offering comical moments, particularly through the secondary characters. Frank and Joe are voiced in a slightly younger manner than in previous audio versions, making this production appealing to the middle-grade (3rd to 6th) target audience. Best for those looking for classic kid mysteries; it's squeaky-clean and reminiscent of bygone days while still somewhat modernized. This makes for a fun family listen. FYI, the producers have chosen to edit the original text for this performance. Recommended for those who enjoy series such as Scooby-Doo, Nancy Drew, and Hank the Cowdog. —*Beth Rosania*

Youth Audio

Deadstream.

By Mar Romasco-Moore. Read by Mia Hutchinson-Shaw.

2025. 7hr. Listening Library, DD (9798217019304). Gr. 9–12.

Hutchinson-Shaw's emotional range, and some subtle sound effects, immediately immerse listeners in this YA thriller about attacks on live-streamers. Teresa developed agoraphobia after a car accident killed her best friend; she became too afraid to leave her own bedroom. Her streams are picking up in popularity, and her online community of other streamers and viewers is supportive and safe. But, then a popular streamer is attacked by a mysterious shadow in front of tens of thousands of viewers, goes catatonic, and stares blankly into the camera for days. As more and more streamers are attacked, Hutchinson-Shaw realistically depicts the highly anxious Teresa as she weighs the danger of leaving her room and rescuing her friends. She adopts an English accent for a UK streamer, and her depiction of popular streamer Brick is full of cocky machismo. Minor vocal sound effects distinguish when the streamer is talking versus chatting. —*Alex Richey*

The Girl You Know.

By Elle Gonzalez Rose. Read by Victoria Villarreal.

2025. 9.5hr. Bloomsbury, DD (9781547616824). Gr. 9–12.

Villarreal does an excellent job narrating this riveting upper YA dark academia thriller about twin girls surviving very different yet equally harsh realities. When Solina is found dead and authorities brush away any suspicions regarding her death, Luna takes her sister's place at Kingswood Academy, where she suspects Solina's killer is hiding. Quickly discovering that private school is not the

doorway to a different life they'd hoped it was, Luna finds instead a place of secrets, where friends are rare and enemies are everywhere, and worst of all, her sister might not be the girl she thought she knew. Villarreal's talent shines as she plays all the characters with distinct voices, carrying the story forward and bringing moments to life, whether they're action-packed or emotional and introspective. An absolutely thrilling listen, perfect for fans of *One of Us Is Lying*, by Karen McManus (2017), and *How We Fall Apart*, by Katie Zhao (2021). —*Van Hoang*

A Study in Secrets.

By Debbi Michiko Florence. Read by Mirai.

2025. 6hr. Simon & Schuster Audio, DD (9781668140697). Gr. 4–7.

Suspense and adventure are in the air. But first, there is fear of pain and failure. Megumi, a seventh-grader, went through deep sadness after her mom died. Her new boarding school, where her evasive dad sent "troublemaker" Megumi, is nicknamed the Last Chance Academy by its diverse occupants. Mirai faithfully accompanies Megumi on her bildungs-journey from voluntary loneliness to tentative friendships. She stays true to Megumi's perspective throughout, floundering through a maze of disappointment and distrust, then rejoicing as Meg discovers her strength and joy in a mysterious game of secrets, where her unique problem-solving skills only shine in cooperation with others. Other voices, no less important, emerge from the story thanks to Mirai's ability to offer a colorful range of interpretations. This, the first in a series that will attract young puzzle-based mystery fans, is a delightful story of connections between events but especially among people. An exciting promise of further adventure. —*Milena Durek*

Booklist Backlist

Queer YA Graphic Novels

By Karis Rogerson

Regardless of how the characters in these young adult graphic novels identify on an individual basis, what they all have in common is this: they are queer. In a world that increasingly frowns upon any departure from the cis/het norm, these books provide mirrors for teens who need to know they're not alone.

Across a Field of Starlight. By Blue Delliquanti. Art by the author. 2022. Random/RH Graphic. Gr. 9–12.

Lu and Fassen are the nonbinary main characters of this sf graphic novel. They face down war and long distances to reunite and fight an expanding empire.

As the Crow Flies. By Melanie Gillman. Art by the author. 2017. Iron Circus. Gr. 8–11.

Charlie is feeling isolated not just because she's the only Black teen at the church camp in which this story takes place; she's also queer. But she might not be alone on that second front after all.

Blackwater. By Jeannette Arroyo and Ren Graham. Art by the authors. 2022. Holt. Gr. 8–11.

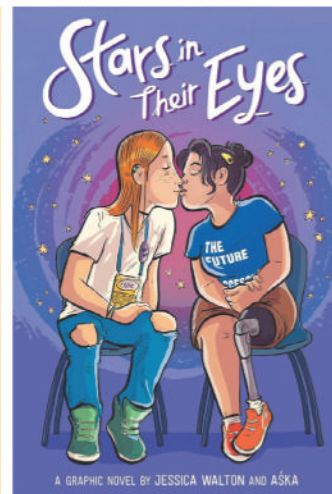
Blackwater, Maine, is the setting for a supernatural mystery in which tough-guy Tony and quiet Eli befriend each other—and maybe develop more-romantic feelings, too.

Bloom. By Kevin Panetta. Art by Savanna Ganuchau. 2019. First Second. Gr. 9–12.

Ari and Hector could have a beautiful romance in this queer graphic novel—if Hector weren't interviewing for a job to replace Ari before he moves to the big city to escape their tiny beach town. Detailed blue-hued illustrations bring the story to life.

Check, Please! #Hockey. By Ngozi Ukazu. Art by the author. 2018. First Second. Gr. 9–12.

When Eric, a pastry-baking figure skater from Georgia, joins the college hockey team, he has to contend with a world totally



different from what he's used to. Things get more complicated when his moody—and attractive—team captain gets thrown into the mix.

Constellations. By Kate Glasheen. Art by the author. 2023. Holiday. Gr. 8–12.

Claire is a queer teen battling addiction in the 1980s; the art style in this immersive graphic novel adds atmosphere and brings the story of Claire's fight for survival to life with deep emotion.

Mooncakes. By Suzanne Walker. Art by Wendy Xu. 2019. Oni. Gr. 8–12.

Tam and Nova are a teen werewolf and witch, respectively. When they are at their wits' end and facing down dark forces, Tam turns to Nova and they battle those forces together while rekindling feelings for each other.

The Prince and the Dressmaker. By Jen Wang. Art by the author. 2018. First Second. Gr. 7–12.

In this fairy tale–like graphic novel, a young prince who loves to wear dresses finds the perfect solution when he meets a dressmaker who dreams of greatness. The vibrant art brings their secret collaboration and growing affection sweetly to life.

Stars in Their Eyes. By Jessica Walton. Art by Aska and Bonaia Rosado. 2021. Scholastic. Gr. 7–12.

Maisie is excited to attend a fan convention for her favorite TV-show action hero. While there, she discovers an emergent crush in this love letter to fandom and nerdery that won a Stonewall Honor.



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Yaiba: Samurai Legend, Vol. 1
Story and Art by Goshō Aoyama

Price: \$16.99 US / \$22.99 CAN
ISBN: 9781974756049

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